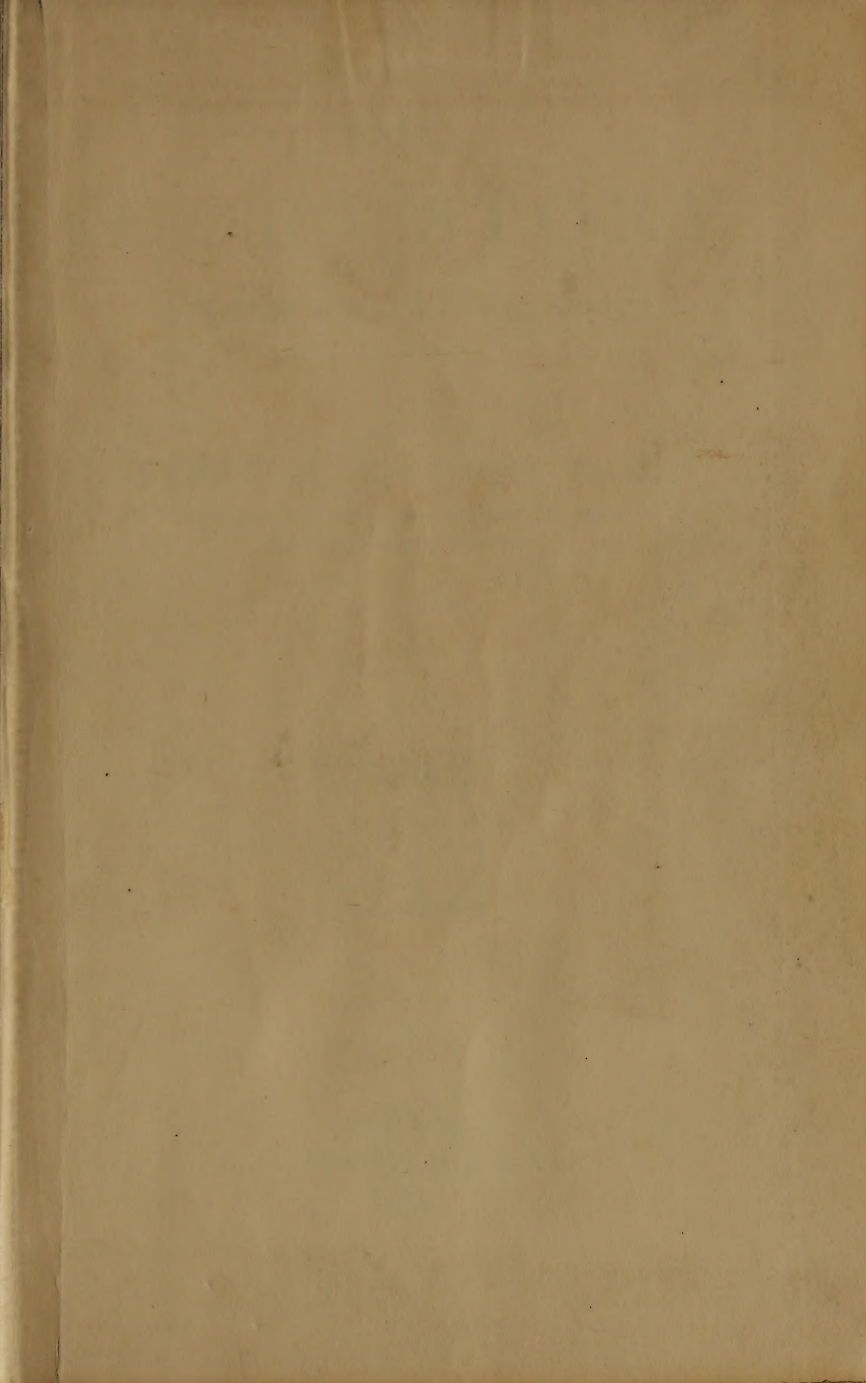


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# THE SHORT STORY

A Technical and Literary Study

BY

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*Professor of Literature and English, The State  
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To My Wife

May Miller Cross





## PREFACE

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*The Aim of the Book.*—The Short Story is a literary form as distinct as the novel or epic poem and almost as uniformly true to its technical type as the ballade or sonnet. This book is written for the numerous readers who enjoy the best short stories in the magazines, in the hope that it may be an aid to them in getting at the meaning of these stories through an understanding of their construction. One who occasionally reads poetry may get some pleasure from the reading of a poem composed in one of the standard poetic forms without knowing anything about the kinds of lyrics, but the reader who understands the technic of the sonnet or ballade derives an added pleasure from reading poems in these forms when he is aware that the author's meaning, his theme, has been embodied skillfully in an exquisite fixed form. An observer who is acquainted with the details of architecture delights in looking upon a finished structure, beautiful, stately, well adapted to its intended use, in which he recognizes a conformity to the laws of construction, an embodiment of historic lines in the decoration and total effect, and the successful conquest of difficulties in order to accomplish the result in the standard technical requirements of architecture. We all get more or less pleasure out of music; but how much greater is the enjoyment of the trained musician over that of one who merely "knows what he likes," as these two listen to *Aida*, or, better still as an illustration, the Quintet from the *Meistersinger* of Von Bülow, or Edward MacDowell's *Brer Rabbit*.

## PREFACE

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The technic of the Short Story, as it is written today by the best of its masters, is quite definite in its essential features and yet so flexible in the non-essentials as to give to the careless reader the impression of lawlessness. The purpose of the book, then, to be a little more specific, is to point out those technical features of the Short Story which are generally recognized by the best writers, and to prepare the reader for the variations in form which the flexibility in the non-essential parts admits, and yet to make clear the fact that there is such a thing as The Technic of the Short Story, the understanding of which opens up the possibilities of comprehension and enjoyment just as the perception of the technical elements of other forms of literary art, of architecture, or of music increases the sweep of one's appreciation of an ode, a public building, or a symphony.

In the preparation of this book there has been no effort made to get together a manual for the beginner in the *writing* of short stories. A number of these already exist. But it is possible that the analysis of the structure of the short story from the reader's point of view may be helpful to the beginner in writing by clarifying his notions about the handling of plot, theme, suspense, and the other elements of technic.

The historical development of this form of art has been touched only superficially. The author's purpose has been to exhibit the story as it is now. We all recognize in these days of exact biological calculation that heredity has much to do with the living youth who flourishes among us; and so, to a certain extent, it is with a literary form. In an attempt to keep the peace with the literary scientists and at the same time to avoid any long delay in getting at the serious business of the book a short paragraph has been devoted to each of the more important branches of the family tree of the Short Story.

## PREFACE

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*Acknowledgments.*—The publication of this book would have been impossible without the personal permission given generously and freely by a number of authors to use their copyright material, some of it their most recent work. I wish to thank most heartily James B. Connolly, Joseph Conrad, A. Conan Doyle, Hamlin Garland, A. H. Hawkins, Jack London, Arthur Morrison, Ruth Sawyer, and Archibald J. Wolfe.

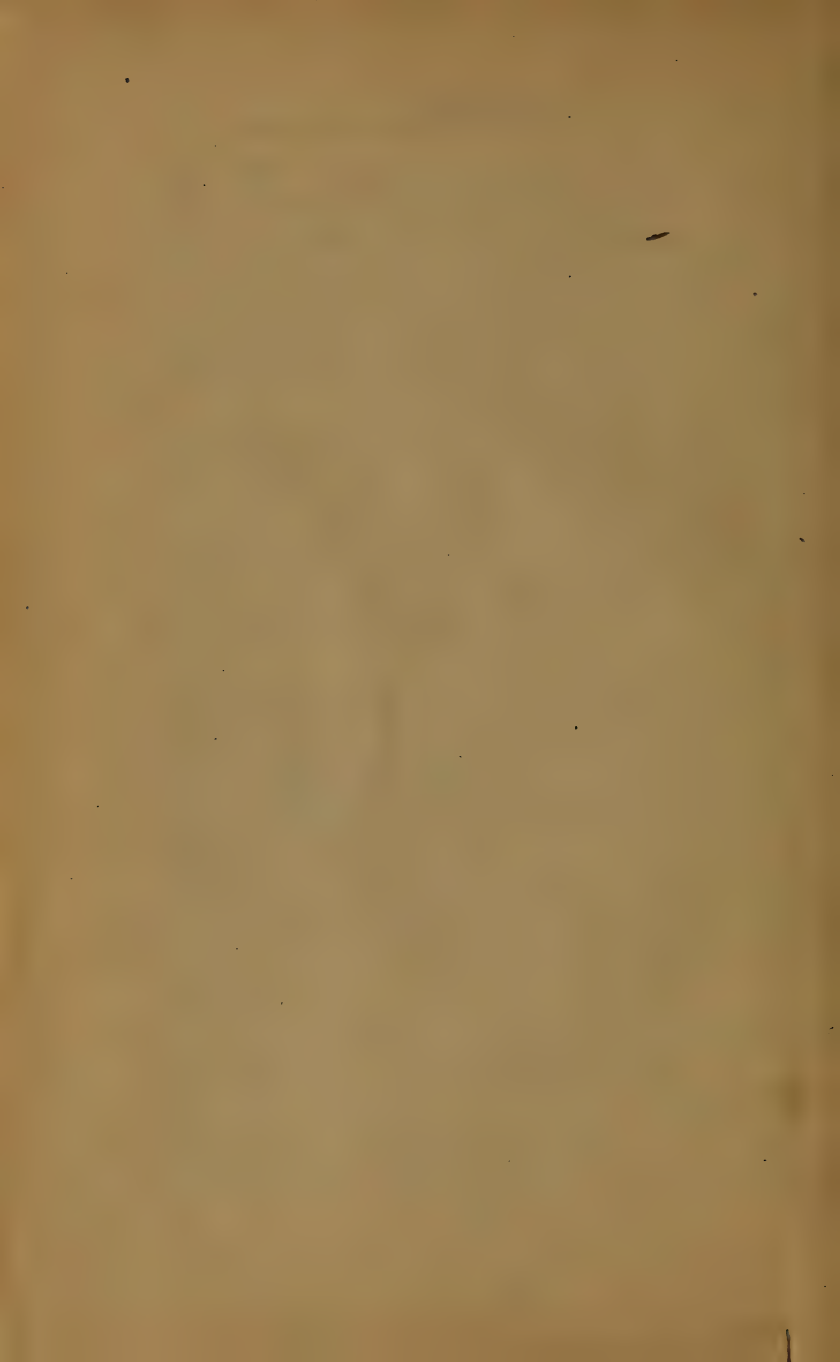
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E. A. C.

THE STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE OF COLORADO,  
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# CONTENTS

---

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY . . . . .	3
The Prose Tale and the Short Story — <i>The Tales of the Magicians</i> — <i>The Arabian Nights' Entertainments</i> — Old Testament Stories — Greek and Roman Tales — <i>Gesta Romanorum</i> — Beast Fables and Picaresque Tales — Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> — Sir Thomas Malory's <i>Morte D'Arthur</i> — Episodes in Longer Stories — The Influence of the Essayists — Hawthorne and Poe — The Modern Short Story — The Chronological Development of the Short Story — References.	

## CHAPTER II

THE MATERIALS FROM WHICH STORIES ARE MADE	17
People, Incidents, Setting — Stories of Character, of Incident, or of Setting — The Predominant Element — Suggestions for Study.	

## CHAPTER III

THE SHORT STORY IS AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE	25
How the Impression is Made — What is Meant by the Theme — The Means Used in Developing a Theme — A Classification of Themes —	

# CONTENTS

---

PAGE

Groups of Themes — The Writer's Primary Purpose — The Greatest Themes — Suggestions for Study.

## CHAPTER IV

PLOT . . . . .	39
A Typical Plot Diagram — Other Plot Diagrams — The Plot in a Detective Story — Summary — An Example for the Study of Plot — <i>The Piece of String</i> , by Guy de Maupassant — The Plot Diagram for <i>The Piece of String</i> — Suggestions for Study.	

## CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTERS . . . . .	59
How Many Characters — What Kind of People — The Characters Must be Worth Knowing — Unusual People — People in Unusual Situations — Unusual Impressions of Characters and Life — Condensations of Experience — Character Portrayal and Development — The Two Methods of Delineating Character — Suggestions for Study.	

## CHAPTER VI

THE REMAINING MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME . . . . .	69
Setting — Emotion — Tone — Style — Appearance of Truth — Some Definitions and Distinc-	

## CONTENTS

---

PAGE

tions — Realism and Romance — Idealism and Symbolism — Distinctions in Terms — The Short Story, the Novelette, and the Novel — References — Suggestions for Study.

### CHAPTER VII

THE MANAGEMENT OF MATERIALS . . . . .	80
Point of View — Titles — Beginnings — Conversation — Suspense — Suggestion and Restraint — Endings — References — Suggestions for Study.	

### CHAPTER VIII

A PLAN FOR THE STUDY OF ANY SHORT STORY . . . . .	92
<i>The Whirligig of Life</i> , by O. Henry — The Plan Applied to the Study of <i>The Whirligig of Life</i> .	

### SHORT STORIES FOR STUDY

Ligeia, by Edgar Allan Poe . . . . .	109
Dr. Heidegger's Experiment, by Nathaniel Hawthorne . . . . .	131
The Necklace, by Guy de Maupassant . . . . .	146
Three Arshins of Land, by Lyof N. Tolstoi . . . . .	158
Where Love is, There God is Also, by Lyof N. Tolstoi . . . . .	173
The Father, by Bjornstjerne Bjornson . . . . .	191
The Mysterious Bride, by James Hogg . . . . .	196
The Prodigal Son, The New Testament . . . . .	217
The Taking of the Redoubt, by Prosper Merimee . . . . .	220

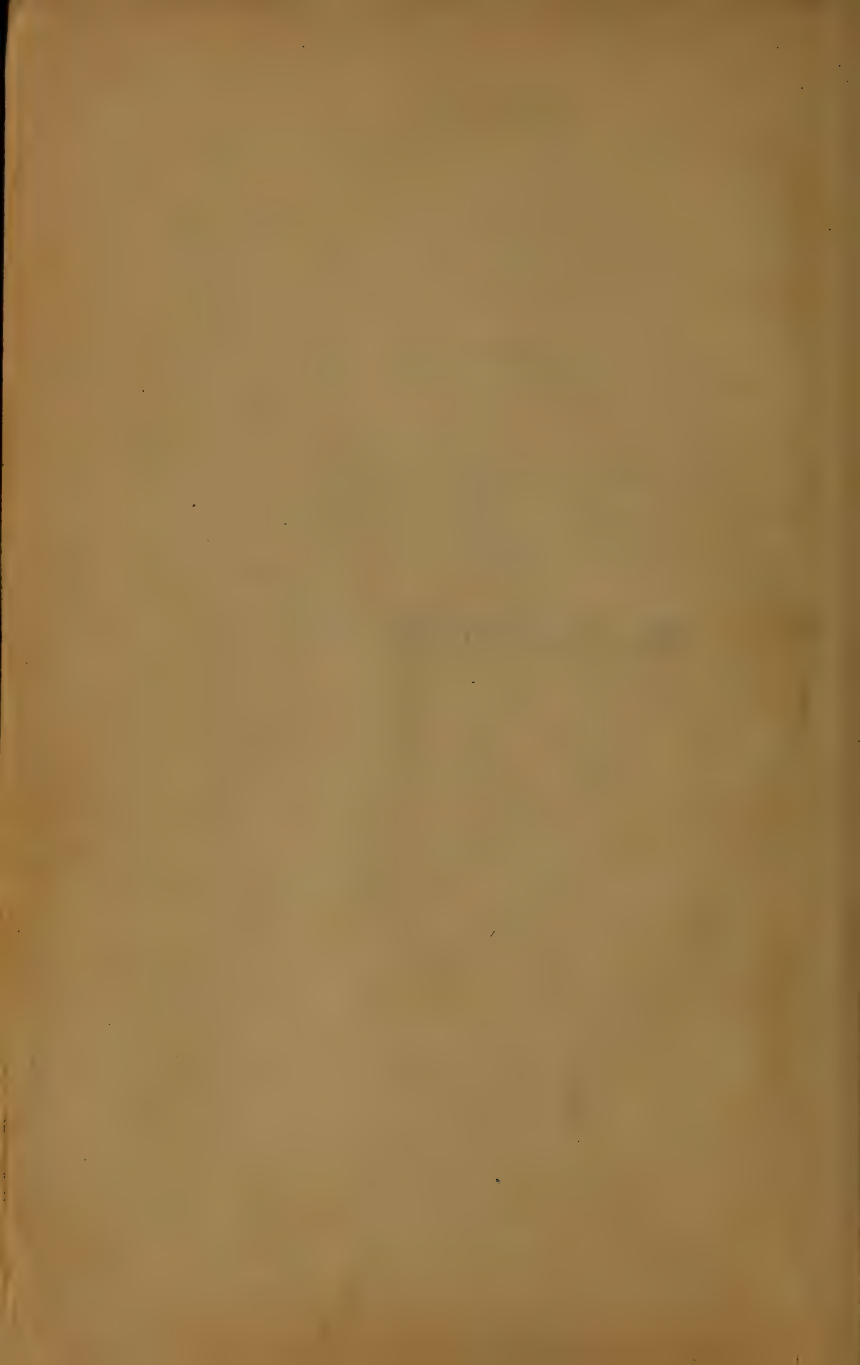
## CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
<i>On the Stairs</i> , by Arthur Morrison . . . . .	228
<i>The House Opposite</i> , by Anthony Hope . . . . .	234
<i>The Adventure of the Speckled Band</i> , by Arthur Conan Doyle . . . . .	241
<i>Will o' the Mill</i> , by Robert Louis Stevenson . . . . .	277
<i>The Truth of the Oliver Cromwell</i> , by James B. Connolly . . . . .	313
<i>Samuel</i> , by Jack London . . . . .	361
<i>The Princess and the Vagabone</i> , by Ruth Sawyer	389
<i>Heart of Darkness</i> , by Joseph Conrad . . . . .	406
<i>Martha's Fireplace</i> , by Hamlin Garland . . . . .	450
Bibliography . . . . .	477
List of Short Stories . . . . .	480
Index . . . . .	492



# THE SHORT STORY



# THE SHORT STORY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

Two facts about the short story are very significant: it is probably the oldest literary form, and it was the latest in point of time to receive exact definition of its purpose and scope, and full unfolding of its artistic and dramatic resources. The first fact means that the short story is a vital and not an artificial form of literature, and fits itself instinctively to certain impulses and interests of men; the second fact—the fact that the short story had to wait for the insight and skill of men of the genius of Poe, Hawthorne, Stevenson, Kipling, and Maupassant—means that as a literary form the short story ranks with the highest and most exacting forms of art.—*Hamilton W. Mabie. Introduction to "Stories New and Old."*

AMONG unlettered people of our own time the practice of telling and retelling stories of their experiences, stories that they have heard, or stories that they have imagined is a most common form of diversion. This custom of telling brief tales is perhaps as old as oral speech, for man seems to find in fiction, however crude, a means of diversion and entertainment. Men dwelling in caves in the stone age, men gathered around savage camp fires, men "sitting at the gates of Damascus or Bagdad" whiled away the time and entertained those

## THE SHORT STORY

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within earshot with diverting tales — crude pieces of fiction; but the evolution of the Short Story from these earliest pieces of oral fiction to the artistic Short Story of the present day has been a long and slow process reaching its culmination in the tales and stories of Poe and Hawthorne, not more than seventy years ago — within the memory of men now living — and coming to its perfection in those of De Maupassant, Stevenson, and Kipling in the time of the present generation.

Dr. William J. Dawson in his *Makers of English Fiction* calls fiction a kind of lie told in such a manner as to seem true. With some such idea in mind Professor Charles F. Horne in *The Technique of the Novel* shows that fiction is literally older than speech, for even the cat, he says, practices a cunning fiction when she strolls away from the half-dead mouse with a disinterested, somewhat bored look, only to turn and spring lightly upon it again as it tries to drag itself away. But for a study of the actual beginnings of prose fiction in speech we must rely upon the records of the earliest tales set down in writing.

*The Prose Tale and the Short Story.*— The men who told the tales around the savage camp fires perhaps had no other aim than to entertain by rehearsing an actual occurrence. They had not even so much skill in arranging their stories, in omitting irrelevant matters, in coloring with imagination, as the loafer around the rusty stove in a village store exhibits today as he offers his worn stock of fiction to his companions for the tenth or sixtieth time. The ordinary tale in prose is very different from the artistic Short Story. Everyone is familiar with the back-fence conversation — “cackleiza-



## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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tion," Dr. Stanley Hall calls it — which cannot omit irrelevant details, but which must include every circumstance in time-sequence between the beginning and culmination of the delectable gossip. There is a vast difference between such narrations and the real Short Story.

*The Tales of the Magicians.*—The most ancient record of prose stories is an Egyptian collection of tales contained in the ancient papyri. These stories are called by English scholars *The Tales of the Magicians*, and are published in two volumes by Professor Petrie. The collection is as old as 2700 B. C., and most scholars believe that its true date is approximately 4000 B. C. The sons of King Cheops (the great pyramid builder) are trying to entertain their father with some interesting stories. When one son has told the king some marvelous tale that he has heard, another steps forward and begins his story of "strange things." Perhaps the best known of these tales is one called *The Shipwrecked Sailor*. A translation of this may be read in Jessup and Canby's *The Book of the Short Story*. A sailor is shipwrecked upon a mysterious island, all his companions perishing. The island is ruled by a great serpent, and inhabited only by serpents. These treat the unfortunate sailor kindly, and send him home with rich gifts when the next ship passes that way.

In brief this is the story. What it lacks of meeting the technical requirements of the Short Story in the modern sense will be apparent after reading the chapters in this book on the technic of the Short Story.

*The Arabian Nights' Entertainments.*—To try to make a list of the collections of oriental tales in the order of

## THE SHORT STORY

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their age would be unprofitable, for exact dates are not known. The oldest reference to *The Thousand and One Nights* is B. C. 987. The stories are doubtless much older than that. Many devices have been employed by writers, ancient and modern, to give some degree of unity to a series of unrelated tales. The need of such devices is seen in *The Tales of the Magicians*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, to take an ancient, a medieval, and a modern instance. Perhaps, none of the devices has exceeded in cleverness that of the *Arabian Nights*. Schariar, Sultan of India, is accustomed to select a new wife for each new day, and to have her put to death the following morning. Scheherazade, daughter of the grand vizier, being selected one day, tells the sultan an interesting story at night and promises another for the following night. The sultan spares her life in order to hear the next story. This is kept up for a thousand and one nights (till the author of the volume has exhausted his stock of stories) and then the law requiring the sacrifice of the bride of a day is repealed, since it has been so long disregarded. Probably the best known of the stories from *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* are *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp*, and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*.

*Old Testament Stories*.—The Hebrews were a religious people. It is not at all strange, then, that when they tell stories, they should have in mind a purpose beyond mere entertainment. Most of their stories have a distinct lesson to teach. Jotham's parable of *The Trees Choosing a King* (Judges 9:7-15) is an ironical reminder of how the people have chosen the worst of the sons of Jerubaa! to be his successor and their king. The purpose of *The*

## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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*Book of Ruth*, may have been any one of three or four: To show the lineage of David; to show that Jehovah of the Israelites might also be the God of a Moabite — a foreigner; to show how faithfulness and service are rewarded; or some similar theme. *The Book of Jonah* is probably as pure a piece of fiction as Jesus' parable of *The Prodigal Son*. The Israelites had all along thought of Jehovah as a national deity. Some prophet with a wider vision than the mass of his countrymen wished to teach them that there are no village gods and national gods, but that Jehovah is God of the whole world — of the solid land, of the sea and the creatures of the deep, of even distant heathen Nineveh, as well as of Canaan. To impress this truth he told the story of a prophet who did everything he could to avoid that conclusion and to disregard God's command to preach in Nineveh, and closed his tale on a half-humorous note — Jonah sulking in the shade of the gourd vine because God had shown mercy to a people not of Israel. *The Prodigal Son* differs from this story in that it avoids actual names and places. It is presented as pure fiction to impress a definite theme. Just as an earthly father forgives a wayward son, so does the Heavenly Father forgive his own wayward ones when they return repentant from their wanderings. In *The Book of Jonah* the prophet veiled his fiction behind the fact that somewhere in the indistinct past there had been a lesser prophet named Jonah to whom he could ascribe his imaginary experiences. These books of *The Old Testament* were probably written somewhere between B. C. 350 and B. C. 750.

*Greek and Roman Tales*.— Although the Greeks were masters in other forms of art and literature, their

## THE SHORT STORY

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contribution to fiction is so small and so little known as to have made little or no impression upon subsequent writers of tales. What little was done by the Greeks and Romans is briefly reviewed both as to matter and treatment in Horne's *The Technique of the Novel*, Chapter IV. Students who wish to go into that subject should read the chapter. There is, however, one book which should not be omitted from this account. Early in the second Christian century Lucius Apuleius, a Roman Platonic philosopher, born in Africa, wrote in Latin a book called *Metamorphoses, or The Golden Ass*. It is a loosely connected narrative with occasionally a detached episode, standing out as a distinct tale. The story of *Cupid and Psyche* is such an episode, and one which has survived to the present time.

*Gesta Romanorum*.—There are two remarkable circumstances about the collection of stories called *Gesta Romanorum* (Deeds of the Romans). The first is that this Latin book was probably written in England (about 1300); and the second, that only a few of the 181 tales in the common text have anything to do with the Romans. This book, to which we look with great respect as the inspiration of many a writer of tales and the source of many a plot still used in fiction, is a collection of about all the good stories known to the medieval man at that time. Dr. W. J. Dawson, in his *Great English Short Story Writers*, gives a hint of the influence of these stories when he shows how the germ of one of Aristotle's stories was preserved in the eleventh tale of *Gesta Romanorum*. This tale called, *Of the Poison of Sin*, subsequently furnished the plot used by Hawthorne in *Rapicinni's Daughter*, by Holmes in *Elsie Venner*, and by



## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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Richard Garnett in *The Poison Maid*. Other of these plots may easily be traced in modern stories.

This book was not prepared for mere entertainment, however. Each of the tales is followed by a moral application. One may readily surmise that the medieval parish priest used these stories to illustrate his sermons, much as the *Lives of the Saints* formed the nucleus of their homilies.

The reader must remember that these stories were not invented by the compiler of the book. They were merely collected from all known sources, and some of them, at least, are as old as the love of fiction itself.

*Beast Fables and Picaresque Tales*.—Two other forms of ancient fiction helped to mould the love for short tales in prose. These are the Beast Fables, such as *Aesop's Fables*, the *Stories of Reynard the Fox*, and Joel Chandler Harris' modern *Uncle Remus Stories*; and *Rogue Stories* (called picaresque from the Spanish *picar*, a rogue), such as the German *Hans Eulenspiegel*, the Spanish *Little Lazarus of Tormes*, the English adventure stories of Sir John Mandeville, and those of that other cheerful and picturesque liar, Baron Munchausen. Each of these, and the fairy tale too, has contributed something, either of character, setting, or incident to the technic of the modern Short Story.

*Boccaccio's The Decameron (1353)*.—There is an Italian collection of stories in prose which exerted as great an influence upon the makers of fiction as the *Gesta Romanorum*. This is the hundred tales (Decameron) of the Italian poet, Boccaccio, 1313-1375. Like the *Gesta Romanorum* this is again just a collection of well-known tales held together by an enveloping plot similar to those

## THE SHORT STORY

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used later by Chaucer, in *The Canterbury Tales*, and Longfellow, in *The Tales of a Wayside Inn*. One of the most famous of these stories of *The Decameron* is *The Story of Patient Griselda* used by Chaucer about 1386 as *The Clerk's Tale*. Chaucer says in his prologue to this tale that he learned it from the Laureate Poet Frauncys Petrarch at Padua. Petrarch was a friend of Boccaccio, and was probably visited by Chaucer on one of his trips to Italy.

The passion for collecting old tales and weaving them together after the fashion of *The Decameron* was widespread. Similar books were made by Gower (*Confessio Amantis*), by Lydgate (*Fall of Princes*), and by others in England in the early fifteenth century.

*Sir Thomas Malory's Morte d'Arthur*.—More important than any other of these medieval books, and the one which has exerted the largest influence on English literature, is one which has been used but little by the writers of fiction—the *Morte d'Arthur* (about 1470) of Sir Thomas Malory. This book is the final medieval form of the stories of King Arthur, and was the principal source of Tennyson's Arthurian Cycle, *The Idylls of the King*.

*Episodes in Longer Stories*.—In these paragraphs the progress of short tales in prose has been sketched from the earliest known beginnings to comparatively modern times. Before we begin to consider the change from the ancient prose tale to the modern Short Story, however, some account must be taken of episodes which occasionally appeared as chapters in longer works of fiction. There are chapters in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and in other early works

## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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of fiction, which, taken from the book, make distinct units. The technic of the modern novel does not admit the digression of the detached episode, but after the advent of the real novel, while yet its form was plastic, such unrelated episodes were admitted. *The Tale of the Old Man of the Hill*, in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1748), *Wandering Willie's Tale* in Scott's *Redgauntlet* (1824), and *The Princess' Tragedy* in Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* illustrate the employment of this device. Had there been public taste and a vehicle for publication for the Short Story such as we have in our modern magazines, it is probable that these novelists would have omitted such digressions from their larger stories and published them in the magazines as Short Stories, just as many of our novelists now use the chips from their workshops, the episodes in their larger pieces of fiction.

*The Influence of the Essayists.*—Printing had come to be comparatively inexpensive, and readers quite numerous by the beginning of the eighteenth century. There was, accordingly, a demand for cheap periodical publications by a body of readers large enough to warrant the experiment. The contents of such papers as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* of Addison and Steele, and *The Guardian* of Johnson were news of the town and social comment, and commonly an essay, usually light in tone, concerning some topic which the author thought would be of general interest. Occasionally one of these essays was presented in the form of fiction—a brief tale. Sometimes these sketches were loosely joined together by an enveloping fiction, as in the series of essays by Addison called *The Sir Roger de Coverly Papers*. A better example of fiction in these periodical

## THE SHORT STORY

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publications is the detached story called *The Vision of Mirza*.

No doubt such pieces as these inspired the writers of fiction of the early years of the nineteenth century and turned them toward *the tale*, refined and polished in style, but still lacking some of the essential qualities of the Short Story. Prominent among these writers was the Scotch poet, James Hogg (1770-1885), "The Ettrick Shepherd"; and the American, Washington Irving (1783-1859). From the volume of *Tales and Sketches* of the former Dr. Dawson selects the story of *The Mysterious Bride* as a typical Short Story. Irving's tales, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*, are familiar to all.

*Hawthorne and Poe*.<sup>\*</sup>—As any form of art is growing toward perfection, those who practice it are usually unconscious of the technical processes which they employ. The genius, once in a long while, manages his materials in such a way as to produce the artistic result; but even the genius in the formative period of the art follows no law but the law of necessity, which he instinctively feels will produce the effect he desires. When such an artistic effect has been produced a few dozens of times, then men of analytic minds study the processes employed by the great artists and deduce the technical principles involved in the production of the artistic effect. Such a body of technical knowledge once having been established is the common property ever after of both the true artist and the mere craftsman. The greatest genius of all is

<sup>\*</sup>For a discriminating criticism of Poe and Hawthorne see *American Prose Masters* by Brownell, W. C.—Charles Scribner's Sons.



## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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the one who has the instinctive power to create, and then becomes conscious of the means which he has used. In dramatic literature Shakespeare was such a genius. He had the creative mind of the unconscious artist; then he became consciously aware of the means which were needed to produce a given effect — of the minute details of the technic of dramatic poetry and stage craft — and so he is reckoned the greatest dramatic poet of the world.

The honor of producing the genius who first became conscious of the technic of the Short Story is perhaps due to America. In a measure Hawthorne (1804-1864) was conscious of the means he used. In a greater measure this consciousness of means was Poe's (1809-1849). Short Stories were produced before the time of these men, but when a writer succeeded in producing such a story, it seemed by chance that he did so, for he did not follow up his success by writing other stories in which he employed the elements of artistic technic seized by chance in the successful Short Story.

If we reduce the technical requirements of the real story to the very lowest terms — say the necessity of producing a single narrative effect — we shall find a number of tales before Hawthorne's and Poe's which meet this single technical specification: Defoe's *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal* (1706), Addison's *The Vision of Mirza* (1711), Hogg's *The Mysterious Bride* (1820), Scott's *Wandering Willie's Tale* (1824), Austin's *Peter Rugg, The Missing Man* (1824), Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1819), and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1819) — each of these succeeds in producing a single narrative effect. But when we add to this singleness of impression other elements which we now consider essential, such as

## THE SHORT STORY

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the greatest economy of means, the embodiment of a theme, unity of tone, the use of fitting background, truth in the portrayal of characters, etc., we find that most of them, perhaps all, fall short in one or more of these particular requirements.

Admitting that there were many delightful tales before the time of Poe and Hawthorne, even some true short stories, we must reassert that it was these men who became conscious of the art of story writing and made use of their knowledge time after time in writing their stories.

*The Modern Short Story.*—Since Poe pointed out the way, there have been thousands of writers of Short Stories the world over, and hundreds of these — first, second, and maybe tenth-rate writers — have understood the art better than either Poe or Hawthorne. Among these hundreds there have been a few men and women of genius with great stories to tell and a thorough mastery of the mechanics of their art who have, as a consequence, surpassed even the greatest geniuses, men who had the materials without the conscious knowledge of technic.

The Short Story in recent years has become so effective a means of representing life that no one today needs to feel that the serious novel is the only form of fiction worthy of study and consideration. Compared with the more extensive novel, the Short Story is what the sonnet is to the longer lyric poem — an artistic vessel of a definite form into which an author may pour his plastic material and fix some great and worthy idea as in a mould of beauty.

The technic once established, masters of the art of Short Story writing have sprung up in nearly every

## THE HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

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civilized country; but America and France have led, with England, Russia, and Germany closely following. In all these countries the writers have recognized the essentials of Short Story technic, but mechanical perfection has been approached most nearly in France and America. The present treatise does not assert that every piece of fiction worthy of the name of Short Story will conform to every technical detail of the typical Short Story, but it does set up certain standards to which the Short Story as a type of fiction must conform, making due allowances for individuality in authors and in pieces of work. To make clear what those technical elements of the Short Story are will be the business of the following chapters.

*The Chronological Development of the Short Story.*—Those who are interested in the development of the Short Story from its beginnings in English until the present time may find a scholarly and illuminating treatment of this phase of the subject in Dr. Henry Seidel Canby's *The Short Story in English*. This book is an exhaustive account, a "documented investigation," of the evolution of this phase of fiction in English.

A briefer treatment of the same subject may be seen in his *A Study of the Short Story*, pp. 1-77. For a series of stories arranged chronologically to illustrate the historical development of the Short Story the reader is referred to the same volume, pp. 79-273, or to Brander Matthews' *The Short Story*, or to Jessup and Canby's *The Book of the Short Story*. It is not the purpose of the present volume to enlarge upon this phase of the subject. That has been so well taken care of in these other books that there is no justification for going over it again. What

## THE SHORT STORY

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follows will be a study of the form and meaning of the Short Story as it is written by the masters of today.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE MATERIALS FROM WHICH STORIES ARE MADE

A CARPENTER who starts to construct as simple and common a thing as a rack for drying clothes needs to have a plan in mind before beginning. If he has no plan, he may not come provided with all the tools and materials needed for his work. He would also run the risk of spoiling some of his material by cutting inaccurately — too long or too short. A contractor who agrees to build a house — a more complex structure than a clotheshorse — cannot proceed with nothing more definite than a mental picture of the finished building as his only guide. He must have an architect's drawings — floor plans, elevations, perspective, and detail sheets, and also a set of specifications describing the quality, the kind, and the quantity of the material to be used.

In like manner the writer who is to make a definite impression, artistic, firm, and convincing of reality, would risk the waste of good material and the stability and beauty of the finished work if he did not have in mind, if not actually on paper, the plans and specifications of his novel or story. An architect's plans and specifications correspond pretty closely to the *materials* the writer of fiction has to use and the *methods* he may adopt for the economical and effective use of the material.



## THE SHORT STORY

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### THE STORY WRITER'S MATERIALS

*Polonius:* What is it you read, my lord?

*Hamlet:* Words, words, words.

Stories, it is true, are made of words, but it would be merely witty, and a trifle insolent today, as it was in Hamlet's day, to say we read "Words, words, words." Words are only vehicles for the conveyance of ideas from mind to mind. The actual materials at the command of the story writer are three:

#### 1. PEOPLE. 2. INCIDENTS. 3. SETTING.

*People.*—Instead of people one is tempted to say *characters*, for there are a number of good stories about animals and a few concerning inanimate objects. But after all when we read such stories, they interest us because the characters exhibit human qualities or reflect some light on human nature. Edward Peple has written a capital story, *A Night Out*, in which the principal actors and speakers are cats—a patrician, blue-blooded Thomas, a disreputable, alley Tom and some of his female friends of doubtful gentility. This story is true to cat character, but we are interested in it because the author has humorously hit off some human characteristics, which are too serious to be treated lightly in a piece of fiction dealing with people, and which would lose much in attractiveness if treated as a profound study in human psychology, such as it really is. Charles Johnstone's *Chrysal, or The Adventures of a Guinea*, was interesting to readers a hundred and fifty years ago, not because it related the journeyings and experiences of a piece of money, a coin, but because it pictured

## THE MATERIALS

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the life of *people* in various social levels and in various places. After all, then, a story, to be interesting to human beings, must be a story about *people*.

*Incidents.*—A writer who wishes to go beyond mere portrait painting, one who wishes to get his people into some sort of action, must have them do something or have something happen to them. There have been seen in print many excellent “character sketches”—pictures of interesting or odd people in some characteristic pose or action.

“*The Lady with the Fringe*,” *Current Opinion*, February, 1913, is a remarkably good example of a sketch, though the “lady” is in action—“carryin’ the bag, young feller, carryin’ the bag.” Incidents are the things that characters do, or the things which happen to the characters. When the student comes to the study of plot and theme, he will see that the incidents must be arranged in such a way as to develop a theme. They cannot be set down haphazard; but for our present purpose it is sufficient to say that the two main elements out of which stories are evolved are *characters* and *incidents*.

*Setting.*—School dramatics are sometimes arranged to be presented without any stage properties or scenery beyond the usual schoolroom platform, desk, and chairs. But these little plays take on new life when the stage is set to present a picture of the place and time represented by the drama, and the characters themselves appear in appropriate costumes. The setting, or background, of a story does for the piece of fiction just what painted scenery, stage properties, costumes, and supernumeraries do for a play.

*Setting* includes *Place*, *Time*, and *Conditions*, and

## THE SHORT STORY

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*Atmosphere* and *Tone* as well, as they are imagined at the time preceding or at the beginning of the story. In fact the *background* of a story is made up of all the elements which the author combines to prevent the action from seeming to take place in some vague, blank locality. In other words, the setting gives to the characters and incidents "a local habitation and a name."

### STORIES OF CHARACTER, OF INCIDENT OR OF SETTING

The first attempts to classify stories in terms of their construction recognized a predominating element. A story was called "a story of setting" if the picture presented by the background was more attractive than either incidents or characters. It was considered "a story of character" if character portrayal or development seemed uppermost in the author's mind. Or it was "a story of incident" if what happened was of greater interest than the people or the time and place.

Some writers have gone so far as to say that the predominating element should reveal its presence and importance in the opening paragraph of the story. A story opening with conversation would be a story of character. One beginning with a descriptive paragraph would be throughout a story of setting. And one whose first paragraph related a happening would be considered a story of incident.

There are a few writers of short stories who seem to have consciously striven to sound the keynote in the opening sentence or paragraph by emphasizing character, or setting, or incident. Poe once said that the end of the story must be in the writer's mind at the very beginning, and that the first paragraph, the first sen-

## THE MATERIALS

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tence, must be a part of the preparation for the culmination.

This statement was probably the foundation of the belief that a story of a certain kind had to begin with material of its own kind. Poe had in mind, perhaps, the ultimate solution of the story which was to be held in suspense till the end, but foreseen from the beginning and foreshadowed by the enveloping atmosphere from the very first word. While many of his stories exemplify the principle under discussion, it seems more likely that it should just have happened so, incidentally, in striking the dominant tone and creating the pervading atmosphere in the opening paragraphs. One does not often see in other short stories any evidence of any established conviction that stories of character must begin with some remark about a character or some speech of a character; that stories of incident must start off with an incident; or stories of setting with description.

### THE PREDOMINANT ELEMENT

Some one of the three elements is usually more prominent than the other two, although in most cases all three are present. As an exercise in technical skill, an author might write a story in which *setting* itself would be made much of without any emphasis upon either character or incidents. One could conceive of an author's wish to make a larger body of readers than he could reach with a descriptive essay acquainted with a scene that he knew and was fond of. Let him make a story with vague figures passing through a series of slight incidents taking place in some enchanting corner of the world and one would have a story of setting. These are not



## THE SHORT STORY

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common. Poe's *The Domain of Arnheim* is one such, however, although not technically a Short Story.

It would be possible to write a story the action of which should take place in some vague, unidentified locality, with no description of the setting, and no hint as to the kind of stage upon which the drama was enacted. The characters in such a story might be indistinct — little more than figures endowed with the power of voluntary motion — but the story might present *incidents* so absorbing that the reader would take no notice of the blank background and the characterless figures. This would be a story of *incident*. In the modern Short Story such extreme exaltation of incident is not common, but in the tales of the *Arabian Nights* it is often seen. In fact, the incidents in ancient tales might have occurred almost anywhere to almost anyone. They were almost pure *tales of incident*. In such modern Short Stories as Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, Merimee's *The Taking of the Redoubt*, and Stockton's *The Lady or the Tiger?* character and setting are subordinated to incident.

Or again *character* might be magnified to the practical exclusion of the other two elements, as it is in *The Prodigal Son*; but in most of our modern stories no one of the three elements excludes the other two. The commonest form of story is a story portraying or developing a character, with incident and setting adequately employed but subordinated to the element of character; either that or one in which the incidents are made more prominent than the characters or background.

A story could hardly be written in which character, incident, and background should be kept equally prominent, nor is it desirable that one should be so written.



## THE MATERIALS

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The great story is one which shows development in a character which is significant and worth knowing, making this apparent by means of a series of incidents, interesting and attention-compelling in themselves, with all exhibited upon a stage of action, a background or setting, worthy of the people and the incidents. The study of any literary form should be an aid to the student in determining whether a piece is of merely temporary interest or of such a quality as to be of permanent value. In other words, the student who comes to understand what qualities are to be expected will be able to distinguish between the good and bad, the indifferent and the poor. Let it be understood that a short story to be well worth while must embody a theme which is true, and which is important enough to repay the reader for the time spent in thinking it through, and that this theme must be artistically presented by the use of incidents and a setting commensurate with the idea, and the student will have at his command the first principles upon which to base a judgment of the stories which he reads.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

An interesting study might be made of the beginnings of a number of stories to determine whether authors consciously begin stories of character with conversation or a remark about a character, stories of incident with action, and stories of setting with a descriptive paragraph. To do this effectively the reader would have to determine with very good judgment, in the first place, which of the three elements, character, incident, or setting, is predominant in each story, and then observe the author's method of beginning. If a group of readers would take

## THE SHORT STORY

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the trouble to work together through a hundred stories in this way, they could determine with a fair degree of accuracy whether this plan is followed deliberately as a rule, or only by chance and occasionally by the standard writers. The results should be set down in percentages for the sake of quick comparisons.

Tabulate the results as follows:

Of the whole number of stories read how many were

1. *Stories in which character is the predominating element?*
2. *Stories in which incident is the predominating element?*
3. *Stories in which setting is the predominating element?*

How many of these in the opening paragraph or paragraphs foreshadow the type of story that is to follow,

1. *Of the stories of character?*
2. *Of the stories of incident?*
3. *Of the stories of setting?*

Combine these results in a final statement as follows:

1. *What per cent observe the so-called rule for beginnings?*
2. *What per cent ignore the rule?*

State your conclusion from your investigation as to whether the rule is followed by the masters of the Short Story with a consistency sufficient to make it advisable for the beginner in story writing always to observe it.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SHORT STORY IS AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

LIKE the novel, the Short Story is a piece of fiction producing a unified effect. Unlike the novel, its single effect is usually an *impression*, instead of a deliberate marshalling together of a large number of diverse elements into a unity. The novel is complex — many experiences, usually of a number of people, pieced together into unity. It is a broad cross-section of life; broad enough to cut through many experiences of many people, but still showing them as a unified part of life. The Short Story is a cross-section of life, too, but of a single life or at most of a thread of life where it crosses and becomes entangled with one or two other subordinated threads — a section through the knot. To illustrate this in a concrete way: George Eliot's *Silas Marner* shows how a man's soul may be saved alive through the influence of a child. The method of the novelist is to exhibit the man at a moment when his soul is "nearest the city of destruction," and then, incident by incident, to show the soul growing back into right relationships with mankind, and a renewed trust in God. The Short Story writer must be impressionistic. He must be swift, choosing one or two incidents near the culmination of the novelist's series, and merely hinting at the other incidents of the series and the other people

## THE SHORT STORY

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involved, he must produce a convincing *impression* of the truth of his theme. This same theme in Short Story form, is used in Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp*.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the culminating chapters of a novel could be drawn off and used as a Short Story. The mechanical structure of the Story is as distinct and complete as that of the novel, and while in some cases the culminating chapters of a novel might furnish the material for a Short Story, that material would have to be worked into the form of a Short Story before it could stand alone.

### HOW THE IMPRESSION IS MADE

Assuming that a Short Story is an impression from life, the first topic that presents itself for elucidation is the technical means which may be employed to make that impression. Let us call the impression which the author wishes to make The Theme of the Story. All other devices, technical processes, materials, and methods of handling the materials may be called the *means* which are to be used in the process of making the theme clear to the reader, and so impressive that it shall be effective. In the main these means are enumerated below.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY THE THEME

The theme of a piece of fiction is the central idea which the author wishes to set forth in his story. It is that phenomenon of nature or of human life which he wishes to make clear to his readers. The theme has been called the "meaning" of the piece of literature. When Edgar Allan Poe spoke of the "single narrative effect" toward which every part of the story leads, he probably

## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

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had in mind the same thing that we now have when we speak of "the theme," "the essential meaning," "the underlying idea," "the thesis," etc., etc.

### THE MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

Having determined what particular "impression from life" he is to present in his story, the author's next step is to take stock of the means at his command capable of being used in exhibiting this theme. The following list includes most of these. They are: *Plot, Characters, Setting, Emotion, Tone, Appearance of Truth, Suspense, Suggestion* and *Restraint*, and *Style*. The detailed treatment of these matters is taken up in later chapters.

### A CLASSIFICATION OF THEMES

It is a mistake to think that the theme of a story is the same as the moral which used to be attached to a fable, or that the theme can always be stated in the form of a moral or philosophical truth. In many cases it is doubtful whether the author ever consciously formulated the theme. But it is true that a story, if it is worth while at all, does embody some significant impression of life. This impression *may* admit of a positive statement in the form of a truth, such as "The good are rewarded, and the wicked punished," but it need not. Themes are so different in their nature that no clear idea of their variety can be obtained without grouping them like with like.

While the theme of a story is an impression of life, it is not often that a story writer is content merely to build up a story around an impression, although that method has been used occasionally by writers of the



## THE SHORT STORY

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highest rank. Ordinarily the author, having made some observation of life and having discovered what he regards as a truth, wishes to put that discovery before the world in a convincing piece of fiction. Rudyard Kipling conceives it as possible that sometimes one man and one woman are born for each other, and that, being so intended for each other, half the world cannot keep them apart. This theme he puts into the story of *The Brushwood Boy*. Knowing the power which the human will exerts upon the physical being, Edgar Allan Poe imagines the possibility of a will strong enough to overcome death itself. This is the theme of *Ligeia*. De Maupassant observes that effects in nature are sometimes out of all proportion to causes. Twice he embodies this idea in fiction — in *The Piece of String* and in *The Necklace*. Stated concretely, this theme is actually worded in the latter, "What a little thing it takes to make you or to lose you." Enough has been shown in these three examples chosen at random to indicate that themes are of various kinds. It is hardly possible under half a dozen headings to classify all the kinds of themes, for there are sure to be, now and then, stories which refuse to submit to the bonds of general classification. Nevertheless, under a few heads the typical themes may be cataloged.

Dr. Henry van Dyke has said, very probably in answer to many inquiries, concerning the meaning of *The Other Wise Man*, that the whole meaning could not be put into a single sentence. If it were possible to do so, he says, the story would hardly be worth the telling. This statement seems temperate and just; but at the same time we believe that the *large* meaning of the story is perfectly

## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

---

clear to every discriminating reader, and that it can be stated in a single sentence. This moving story says, The way to worship the Savior and to serve God is to do the Savior's will and God's work in the act of serving one's fellow men. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Some other "lessons" which might be drawn from this story are: One would be justified in telling a lie if by so doing the life of a little child might be saved; or a lifetime spent in seeking the Christ is not misspent. These are but two of the many worthy thoughts suggested by the story, but who would place these above the larger theme which the author keeps constantly before the reader? Dr. van Dyke keeps *this* thought ever prominent, no matter what others are offered as the story progresses toward its culmination.

In determining what the theme of a story is the beginner must guard against confusing the terms "theme" and "moral." He must not ask, What does this story teach? for many stories do not teach at all in the sense of presenting a moral lesson. But rather let him begin his statement of the theme by saying to himself, The author's purpose in writing this story was to show that — etc. Sometimes the theme is a lesson, a "moral"; but more commonly it is not. The theme of *The Other Wise Man* could be stated either way. As a moral it would read: The lesson (or moral) of this story is that one can best serve God by doing His work in the world. Stated as meaning it would be like this: The author's purpose was to show that one best serves God who loves mercy and does justice to his fellow men. These two statements are practically identical, but the themes of

## THE SHORT STORY

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stories not of the moral type cannot be stated in the manner of the first formula. Take, for example, Jack London's story of character, entitled *Samuel*. Here we have a true impression of life. Stated in terms of the author's primary purpose the theme is as follows: This story was written to delineate the character of a woman, with a liking for a name, without a touch of superstition, and with a will so indomitable as to make it impossible for her to compromise with her convictions, no matter how strongly prompted to do so by the calamities which befell her, or how often her simple and superstitious neighbors suggested compromise or surrender to her. The story is an inquiry into the reasons for liking or disliking—the old woman's haunting question, "The why of like." Try to state the theme as a "moral," and you have something like this: If you tempt God with a foolish persistency, He will visit you with untold calamity. And this the author apparently does not believe. Assuredly he does not allow such a conviction to take possession of his principal character, Margaret Henan. To her the cause of calamity is just as much a mystery as it is to Job, for she, like Job, is unaware of any sin at all commensurate with her sorrows.

### GROUPS OF THEMES

1. *The Exhibition of Some Natural Law, or Apparent Lawlessness of Nature.*—A story might be made to illustrate even so prosaic a thing as the physical law, Action and reaction are equal and in opposite directions. Likewise the philosophical law, Like causes produce like effects, might be embodied in a short story. These would be themes illustrating *natural laws*; but

## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

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when De Maupassant shows how picking up a piece of string ultimately caused the death of an old peasant, his theme is the irony of fate. He shows how the effect of an insignificant action is sometimes out of all proportion to the cause.

2. *An Illustration of a Phase of Human Nature.*—In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* Robert Louis Stevenson shows that both good and evil are in the nature of man, and that the lower, meaner part subdues the nobler if occasionally allowed to run riot. A deep conviction of the newer psychology was anticipated in Robert Herrick's *The Master of the Inn*. In this story he says that if the half-forgotten troubles of the soul which lie below the level of consciousness can be brought to the surface and aired in oral confession, the physical ills, indirectly caused by the blot on the soul, will vanish and leave the body strong and responsive to the will.

One other illustration of this kind of theme is seen in James Lane Allen's *Old King Solomon of Kentucky*. No matter how low a man may sink, the story seems to declare, there is some spark of the heroic left in him, and this may be aroused if the stimulus be of the right kind, at the right time, and sufficiently strong.

3. *The Exhibition of Some Human Passion in a Striking, Unusual, or Tense Situation.*—The passion most frequently exhibited in magazine fiction is love. But writers have used over and over all the elemental human passions, such as hate, fear, jealousy, indignation, superstition, devotion to duty, loyalty to friends or kinsmen, loyalty to clan or country, and the like.

Hamlin Garland's *Among the Corn Rows* is an excellent example of the story built upon the theme of love.



## THE SHORT STORY

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Jealousy is the theme of James B. Connolly's *The Truth of the Oliver Cromwell*; Indignation is exhibited in Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman's *The Revolt of Mother*; Superstition, in Arthur Morrison's *On the Stairs*.

The student should not expect to be able to relate every touch that the writer puts into his story to a single theme element, uncolored by others. For example, the setting of each of the stories mentioned in this group is so carefully treated that along with his main impression, his theme, the author, without doubt, was very much interested in the place and the people.

The student needs to be warned against the statement of themes in terms so general that they do not discriminate at all. It is easy to say that a story is "a love story," "a southern story," or "a sea story" without being specific about the truth of life which it contains. In most cases such designations apply to the *setting* and not to the *theme* at all.

4. *The Reproduction of a Phase of Life in a Given Time, Place, or Occupation.*—Authors do not ordinarily use place, time, and occupation as the themes of stories. These are usually nothing more than the setting, or background, for some theme of greater general interest. Once in a while, however, we see stories which appear to be written with no other purpose than to make a picture of life, bringing forward what is usually the background, and placing it in the focus of interest as the main theme. New England village life is exhibited in Mrs. Wilkins-Freeman's *A Village Lear*; life in old New Orleans and the South, in Mr. Cable's "*Posson Jone*"; newspaper life, in Mr. Davis's *A Derelict*; and Colorado mining life in Mr. Garland's *The Spirit of Sweetwater*.



## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

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In all of these stories, place, time, and occupation are background and not theme. In other words, *A Derelict* belongs in group two with Mr. Allen's *Old King Solomon of Kentucky*. Mr. Garland's *The Spirit of Sweetwater* is a story of the regenerating power of love, and belongs to group three. However, in *Pere Raphael*, the sequel to "*Posson Jone*," Mr. Cable seems to have had in mind no other theme than the reproduction of a phase of life in a particular place at a particular time — the New Orleans of 1820. It properly belongs to group four.

5. *The Delineation of Character*.—The characters pictured in stories whose main purpose is character portrayal are in most cases in some way unusual, striking, odd, or peculiar. Examples of short stories having character portrayal as the objective point — the theme — may be seen in Mr. Quiller-Couch's *The Drawn Blind*; in Ruth McEnery Stuart's *Napoleon Jackson*, and in Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *Quite So*. Since, however, the peculiarity in the character of Cordelia Pinsent in *The Drawn Blind* is the inability to believe her son capable of doing wrong (a characteristic of mothers generally), the story might be put into group three. Mr. Quiller-Couch seems, however, to have been more interested in showing how the confidence in the integrity of her son was exhibited by this particular mother, than in the elucidation of the general idea that mothers fail to see the short-comings of their sons and daughters.

6. *The Development or Disintegration of Character Under the Stress of Some Emotion or Circumstance*.—This group will overlap both group five and group three, but many examples may be cited in which

## THE SHORT STORY

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the *main* purpose of the author was to show development or breaking down of character under emotional stress. Hawthorne's *The Great Stone Face* shows development. De Maupassant's *The Coward* shows disintegration under the strain of physical fear. Because of the fact that the story is limited in length there is hardly room for much *growth* of character, for growth is not a mushroom process where human character is concerned. Only a few great Short Stories have adequately managed character development. Character *portrayal* is the business of the Short Story writer; realistic character *development*, that of the novelist. The Short Story writer may, however, create so convincing an impression of character growth or disintegration as to produce the illusion of the whole process in actual operation. This is one of the supreme tests of the literary genius, and is worth striving for.

7. *An Impression of Life*.—Hawthorne was in the habit of setting down in his note books vague impressions with the intention of making a story at some later time to embody the impression. One of his notes reads, "The print of blood of a naked foot to be traced through the streets of a town." This impression is probably the germ of *Dr. Grimshaw's Secret*. Henry James confesses that the appearance of a peculiar or striking character often inspires him to invent a setting and incidents in which such a character might naturally act a significant part. Robert Louis Stevenson once told his cousin, Graham Balfour, that the impression of atmosphere led him to create the characters and incidents of *The Merry Men*, his purpose being to convey to others the feeling he himself had had when he saw the island

## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

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which is the setting for that story. One could well believe that Stevenson had no other purpose in mind than to contrast the vagabond poet Villon with the comfortable but colorless citizen, Seigneur de Brisetout, in *A Lodging for the Night*. This gives one an impression of life, and no more.

In such stories as these there is no universal truth to be taught, no moral to be impressed, no new theory of cause to be advanced, no strange corner of the world to be exploited. Evidently the author wishes merely to entertain with a good story; and to do this he simply embodies an impression.

This group will include a great many stories not easily classified under the other heads. It will be a sort of receptacle for the multitude of miscellaneous stories that refuse to consort with those typical stories which have class characteristics.

### THE WRITER'S PRIMARY PURPOSE

The theme the author had most prominently in mind cannot always be determined at the first glance, though it usually comes to the surface after careful study. For this reason two people reading the same story may not agree as to its theme. *The Truth of the Oliver Cromwell* will illustrate how the theme of a story might by different readers be put into different groups. One reader, seeing no development or disintegration of character, might put the theme into the third group, "The exhibition of some human passion (jealousy) in a striking, unusual, or tense situation." Another might put it in group six on account of the disintegration of character under the influence of jealousy. Still another might

## THE SHORT STORY

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see no more in it than an impression of life, as in group seven. It might be regarded as nothing more than the portrayal of the characters of New England fishermen (group five). Or, lastly, some reader might place the theme in group four, "The reproduction of a phase of life in a particular locality and occupation" (New England fishing life).

Doubtless all of these elements are in the story. In most stories, beside the main theme, several other interests enter. To determine what the real theme is one has to put himself in the place of the author as he begins his story and ask himself, What is the single impression which the story is to make? If the story is well written, the "single impression" which the author desired will become apparent.

In *The Truth of the Oliver Cromwell* the author used New England fishing life (group four) as background. The theme is much more definite than a classification in group seven usually permits, and goes farther than group three; that is, the story shows disintegration of character under the influence of jealousy, and that (group six) is the theme. Character portrayal (group five) is only a means of making the main impression, as are the incidents and setting also.

### THE GREATEST THEMES

Great stories will be found in all the groups mentioned above, for greatness does not depend upon theme alone. The greatest themes, however, are those dealing with some universal phase of human life — with some matter supremely interesting to mankind in any country and in any period of time.



## AN IMPRESSION FROM LIFE

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Love, Jealousy and Hate, Devotion to an Ideal, Courage, and Fear—all the elemental emotions—do not depend upon time or place; and so stories embodying such themes as these were popular a thousand years ago, if artistically presented; they are read with keen interest today; and will thrill their multitudes of readers a thousand years hence. Our manners change; our speech changes; we build differently; we come to think differently; our ethical and religious principles undergo a slow transformation; but there are elemental depths below these currents which, if they change at all, change like nature itself with the slow march of milleniums. *The Odyssey* has not endured the wear of ages simply because it is an absorbing adventure story illuminated by the fire of poetic imagination, but chiefly because its theme is one of the simple, elemental, great things at the bottom of human nature—the triumph of mind over circumstances. Given a sufficient motive, the faithful Penelope in peril at home waiting the ten long years after the fall of Troy, Homer shows the adventurous and crafty Ulysses meeting and overcoming the obstacles set up by nature and man and the gods; and humanity in sympathy with the sorely tried adventurer follows him with breathless interest and rejoices with a species of savage joy in his triumphs. Such themes are simple, but they lie close to the foundation of human experience. Universality of interest lifts the epics above the nation which originated them and makes them world stories.

The writer of a Short Story who succeeds in embodying in his fiction one of these simple but fundamental interests of the human race has taken the first step toward the production of a story really great.



## THE SHORT STORY

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

From the bibliography in this book or from the current magazines select a number of stories, and for each story make a statement of the theme and assign the theme to one of the seven groups.

If a group of readers are working together it will be possible to go over a number large enough to determine what per cent of the themes falls in Group 1, Group 2, etc.

Do you find any that cannot be classified in any one of the groups?

## CHAPTER IV.

### PLOT

The *plot* of a story is the plan which the author makes for the purpose of developing or exhibiting his theme.

HAVING once determined what phase of life he wishes to picture for his readers, the writer's next step in story-making is to construct a framework upon which he can exhibit his picture of life. Robert Herrick desires to show that a hurt of the spirit rankles in the flesh, and that the flesh can be made whole only by thinking more of others than of self, working for others, and at last laying bare the wound of the soul in open recognition and oral confession. His next problem is to lay a plan for the exhibition of his theme. Briefly the plan he constructs is this: A great surgeon suddenly fails because of the loss of nervous control. Trying all sorts of cures without any benefit, he comes finally to an old man who has discovered the secret of lifting the burden from the soul in order to restore the body. The surgeon at last tells his story to the man whom he has wronged long ago; he is absolved, and goes back to his work once more master of himself.

But a plot cannot be made merely by adding incident to incident, like laying dominoes down end to end in a long row. It must be put together more like constructing a house of building blocks. Each incident grows out of the one preceding. First there is a foundation,

## THE SHORT STORY

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then a superstructure; then, having reached the desired height, the builder, with a more rapid movement, adds the culmination in roof and dome.

The necessity of an organized structure in story-telling has been recognized by scholars for many hundreds of years. Aristotle set down the requirement of "a beginning, a middle, and an end," having in mind the same thing, perhaps, that a modern student has when he speaks of the Preliminary Situation, the Complication of the threads of the plot, and the Resolution of the complexity; i. e., the solution of the problem set.

While this principle of plot construction has long been known, the practice of making a plot after this manner is recent. The older writers of tales tried to interest their readers merely by joining together a number of interesting incidents after the fashion of the row of dominoes. The Short Story writer of today starts with a theme, chooses characters, a setting, etc., and then gives the readers the Preliminary Situation — the relation of the characters to each other and their surroundings. This accomplished, he begins the climb up his plot-ladder toward the culmination of the story. In this climb the incidents of the story form the steps. The upward movement is not, then, along a smooth incline, but step by step, incident by incident, each depending upon the one preceding and making natural the one to come, until the author leads the reader to a height from whence he can see the way to a solution of the complexity created during the time of the movement upward. The solution of the complexity we call the *Culmination*. If we think of the making of a story in terms of another figure of speech, we might call this process the weaving together of

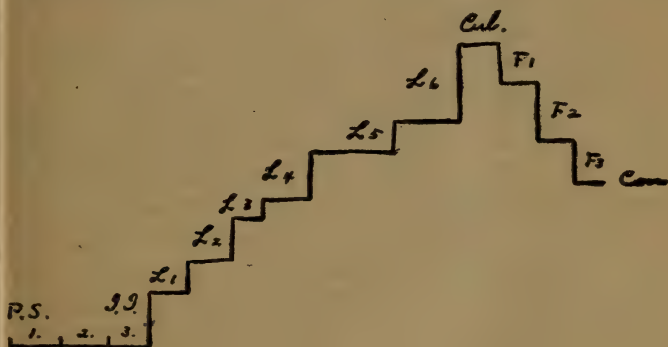
## PLOT

the threads of the plot. Just before the culmination, the threads seem to be in an inextricable tangle — a knot, where all the threads of causation cross each other. Then comes the culmination. The knot is untied — or maybe cut — and the story rounds itself out into a natural conclusion.

The usual form for plot structure is this: First quarter, *Preliminary Situation*; second and third quarters, *Complication*, and *Culmination*; and the fourth quarter, *Conclusion*.

### A TYPICAL PLOT DIAGRAM

The following diagram will help to make clear the movement of a plot developed in this order and with these proportions:



(P. S.) — Preliminary Situation.

1. *Time and Place.*
2. *Characters and their interrelations.*
3. *Preceding significant incidents.*

(I. I.) — Initial Incident. Ladder.— L1. *First inci-*

## THE SHORT STORY

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*dent. L2. Second incident. L3. Third incident. L4. Fourth incident. L5. Fifth incident. L6. Sixth incident.*

(Cul.) — Culmination.

Falling Action.— *F1. First incident. F2. Second incident. F3. Third incident.*

(Con.) — Conclusion.

It is assumed that this diagram represents a story beginning in the logical way with the preliminary Situation. This part moves in a straight line with no rise in the action until the *Initial Incident* — the happening which sets the story into motion — is reached. In the preliminary situation we ordinarily come into possession of the facts as they stand when the story opens. We assume that these facts may be arranged in three groups:

- (1) *Time and Place.*
- (2) *The characters and their relations to each other.*
- (3) *Preceding incidents which affect the story.*

Then some event happens which starts the complication of the plot. This we call the *Initial Incident*. From the *Initial Incident* the story mounts step by step, some of more importance than others in developing the theme, until it reaches a point where the working out of the meaning (the theme) of the story is complete. This portion of the story structure we call the *Ladder* — in this case made up of six steps, L1, L2, etc., of which steps L4 and L6 are much more important in developing the theme than L1, L3, and L5.

The section of the plot structure from the culmination to the conclusion is called the *Falling Action*. Again this may be in distinct steps, each step representing an



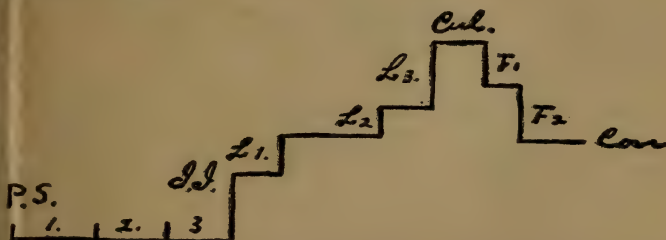
## PLOT

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incident in the story. In our imagined plot we have three steps in the Falling Action.

### OTHER PLOT DIAGRAMS

Not all stories are planned in this perfectly logical order, but the diagram can be varied so as to exhibit almost any plot structure. Frequently the writer will begin with the Initial Incident and then go back and insert the Preliminary Situation. This gives the story a lively and interesting beginning, which the more leisurely story, opening with the Preliminary Situation, may not have; but it too has a fault. It must pause after its lively opening and ask the reader to wait for the necessary explanation of the conditions which precede the Initial Incident — unless the author can deftly suggest the preliminary situation as the plot mounts step by step. Such deft suggestion is very high art and, consequently, somewhat rare. The following diagram illustrates a plot beginning with the Initial Incident and suggesting the Preliminary Situation while developing the story steps:



The length of the horizontal line represents the time between incidents required for explanation. In such a story the mounting of the staircase will probably be

## THE SHORT STORY

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slower than in the other type — the horizontal lines longer than the perpendicular. It will be noted that the facts in the preliminary situation are present, and that their logical place is before the initial incident, even though the story actually begins with the initial incident. In such a diagram as this one, representing the *logical* arrangement of the plot steps, these incidents are placed in their natural position rather than in their actual places in the story.

In writing out the explanation of such a diagram one should make note of the inferred Preliminary Situation, just as if it had been written before the Happening, somewhat as follows:

### Preliminary Situation:

1. *Time and Place.*
2. *Characters and their interrelations.*
3. *Preceding significant incidents, i. e., incidents which affect the movement of this plot, but which have taken place before the opening of the story.*

Initial Incident. Ladder: *L1, L2, L3.*

Culmination. Falling Action. *F1, F2.*

Conclusion.

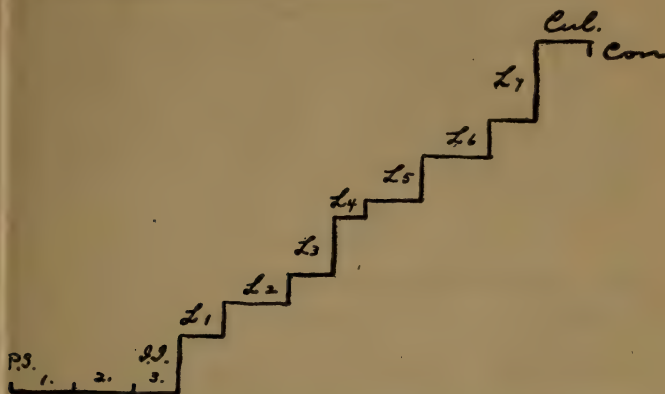
Still another device of the story writer is to make the Culmination and Conclusion coincident, and have no Falling Action. Thinking of plot in terms of threads woven together, we have in such an arrangement the cutting of the culminating knot instead of the process of untying or disentangling. The device of ending a story the moment the theme is worked out, has been very effectively used by many master story writers. This kind

## PLOT

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of combined culmination and conclusion is employed by Stevenson in *Markheim*.

The diagram will be like this:



In this story Stevenson sets up the problem, What shall a man do when evil has laid such a hold upon him that he cannot turn from it and do good, no matter how strong his desire to do so? By means of a carefully planned series of incidents he shows how Markheim is convinced that his course is necessarily downward. Then instead of carefully working from this culmination, or crisis, in the man's career through a series of steps in a falling action, the story ends abruptly with Markheim's decision to cease acting altogether — to give up his life and so conquer evil in the one possible way left for him.

### THE PLOT IN A DETECTIVE STORY

The detective story furnishes another and a strange plot scheme. The story opens with a brief Preliminary Situation; then the knot is tied by someone setting a

## THE SHORT STORY

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problem for the detective to solve. The remainder of the story is the solution of the problem set in the beginning — the untangling of the knotted threads.

In terms of the diagram used thus far in this book there is a Preliminary Situation, a Happening (the setting of the problem); then the story is Falling Action down to the Conclusion. This action consists of the steps in the solution of the mystery. There is no Culmination, in the sense in which the term has already been employed.

### SUMMARY

Plot in fiction has been somewhat fantastically called The Road of a Soul, and in a sense this is a true statement of what plot is. But in a book of this kind it seems better to use the more mechanical definition, quite prosaic to be sure, which was placed at the head of this chapter: Plot is the plan, the framework, which the author uses for developing and exhibiting his theme.

### AN EXAMPLE OF THE STUDY OF PLOT

#### THE PIECE OF STRING\*

By Guy de Maupassant

Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) was a French writer of Short Stories, plays, and novels. He was born in the country, educated in the best schools, and graduated from the College of Rouen. His literary training was the care of his godfather, Gustave Flaubert, the celebrated French novelist. Flaubert was noted for the pains he took to perfect the form of what he wrote. Through a long apprenticeship, publishing nothing till his thirtieth year,

\* Reprinted from *Little French Masterpieces*, with the permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

## PLOT

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Maupassant learned the lesson so well that he perhaps surpassed his master. Practically all the writers and critics regard him as the great master of form in story structure. His themes are usually of absorbing interest, but the level of life he pictures is often low and repellant to many. He is, however, a convincing realist, notwithstanding his cynical view of life and the unpleasant situations he presents. His works most read in English are: The novel, *Pierre et Jean* (1888), and the stories, *Tallow Ball* (1880), *The Horla* (1887), *The Conscript*, *The Coward*, *The Necklace*, and *The Piece of String*. The last two years of his life were crowded by depression, disease, and partial insanity. He died in a private asylum in Paris in his forty-third year.

[P. S.] On all the roads about Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming towards the town, for it was market-day. The men walked at an easy gait, the whole body thrown forward with every movement of their long, crooked legs, misshapen by hard work, by the bearing down on the plough which at the same time causes the left shoulder to rise and the figure to slant; by the mowing of the grain, which makes one hold his knees apart in order to obtain a firm footing; by all the slow and laborious tasks of the fields. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as if varnished, adorned at the neck and wrists with a bit of white stitchwork, puffed out about their bony chests like balloons on the point of taking flight, from which protruded a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of them led a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And their wives, walking behind the beast, lashed it with a branch still covered with leaves, to hasten its pace. They carried on their arms great baskets, from which heads of chickens or of ducks were thrust forth. And



## THE SHORT STORY

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they walked with a shorter and quicker step than their men, their stiff, lean figures wrapped in scanty shawls pinned over their flat breasts, their heads enveloped in a white linen cloth close to the hair, with a cap over all.

Then a market cart passed, drawn by a jerky-paced nag, with two men seated side by side shaking like jelly, and a woman behind, who clung to the side of the vehicle to lessen the rough jolting.

On the square at Goderville there was a crowd, a medley of men and beasts. The horns of the cattle, the high hats, with a long, hairy nap, of the wealthy peasants, and the head-dresses of the peasant women, appeared on the surface of the throng. And the sharp, shrill, high-pitched voices formed an incessant, uncivilized uproar, over which soared at times a roar of laughter from the powerful chest of a sturdy jokel, or the prolonged bellow of a cow fastened to the wall of a house.

There was an all-pervading smell of the stable, of milk, of the dunghill, of hay, and of perspiration—that acrid, disgusting odor of man and beast peculiar to country people.

[I. I.] Master Hauchecorne, of Breaute, had just arrived at Goderville, and was walking towards the square, when he saw a bit of string on the ground. Master Hauchecorne, economical like every true Norman, thought that it was well to pick up everything that might be of use; and he stooped painfully, for he suffered with rheumatism. He took the piece of slender cord from the ground, and was about to roll it up carefully, when he saw Master Malandain, the harness-maker, standing in his doorway and looking at him. They had formerly

## PLOT

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had trouble on the subject of a halter, and had remained at odds, being both inclined to bear malice. Master Hauchecorne felt a sort of shame at being seen thus by his enemy, fumbling in the mud for a bit of string. He hurriedly concealed his treasure in his blouse, then in his breeches' pocket; then he pretended to look on the ground for something else, which he did not find; and finally he went on towards the market, his head thrust forward, bent double by his pains.

He lost himself at once in the slow-moving, shouting crowd, kept in a state of excitement by the interminable bargaining. The peasants felt of the cows, went away, returned, sorely perplexed, always afraid of being cheated, never daring to make up their minds, watching the vendor's eye, striving incessantly to detect the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, took out their fowls, which lay on the ground, their legs tied together, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to offers, adhered to their prices, short of speech and impassive of face; or else, suddenly deciding to accept the lower price offered, they would call out to the customer as he walked slowly away:

“All right, Mast' Anthime. You can have it.”

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus struck midday those who lived too far away to go home betook themselves to the various inns.

[L 1.] At Jourdain's the common room was full of customers, as the great yard was full of vehicles of every sort — carts, cabriolets, tilburys, unnamable carriages,

## THE SHORT STORY

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shapeless, patched, with their shafts reaching heavenward like arms, or with their noses in the ground and their tails in the air.

The vast fireplace, full of clear flame, cast an intense heat against the backs of the row on the right of the table. Three spits were revolving, laden with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton; and a delectable odor of roast meat, and of gravy dripping from the browned skin, came forth from the hearth, stirred the guests to merriment, and made their mouths water.

All the aristocracy of the plough ate there, at Mast' Jourdain's, the inn-keeper and horse-trader — a shrewd rascal who had money.

The dishes passed and were soon emptied, like the jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, his sales, and his purchases. They inquired about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but a little wet for wheat.

Suddenly a drum rolled in the yard, in front of the house. In an instant everybody was on his feet, save a few indifferent ones; and they all ran to the door and windows, with their mouths still full and napkins in hand.

Having finished his long tattoo, the public crier shouted in a jerky voice, making his pauses in the wrong places:

“The people of Goderville, and all those present at the market are informed that between — nine and ten o'clock this morning on the Beuzeville — road, a black leather wallet was lost, containing five hundred — francs, and business papers. The finder is requested to carry it to — the mayor's office at once, or to Master Fortune

## PLOT

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Houlbrequé of Manneville. A reward of twenty francs will be paid."

[L 2.] Then he went away. They heard once more in the distance the muffled roll of the drum and the indistinct voice of the crier.

Then they began to talk about the incident, reckoning Master Houlbrequé's chance of finding or not finding his wallet.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared in the doorway.

He inquired:

"Is Master Hauchecorne of Breauté here?"

Master Hauchecorne, who was seated at the farther end of the table, answered:

"Here I am."

And the corporal added:

"Master Hauchecorne, will you be kind enough to go to the mayor's office with me? Monsieur the mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, drank his *petit verre* at one swallow, rose, and even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were particularly painful, he started off, repeating:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the brigadier.

[L 3.] The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an arm-chair. He was the local notary, a stout, solemn-faced man, given to pompous speeches.

"Master Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen this morning, on the Beuzeville road, to pick up the wallet lost by Master Houlbrequé of Manneville."

## THE SHORT STORY

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The rustic, dumfounded, stared at the mayor, already alarmed by this suspicion which had fallen upon him, although he failed to understand it.

“ I, I — I picked up that wallet? ”

“ Yes, you. ”

“ On my word of honor, I didn't even so much as see it. ”

“ You were seen. ”

“ They saw me, me? Who was it saw me? ”

“ Monsieur Malandain, the harness-maker. ”

Thereupon the old man remembered and understood; and flushing with anger, he cried:

“ Ah! he saw me, did he, that sneak? He saw me pick up this string, look, m'sieu' mayor. ”

And, fumbling in the depths of his pocket, he produced the little piece of cord.

But the mayor was incredulous and shook his head.

“ You won't make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man deserving of credit, mistook this string for a wallet. ”

The peasant, in a rage, raised his hand, spit to one side to pledge his honor, and said:

“ It's God's own truth, the sacred truth, all the same, m'sieu' mayor. I say it again, by my soul and my salvation. ”

“ After picking it up, ” rejoined the mayor, “ you hunted a long while in the mud, to see if some piece of money hadn't fallen out. ”

The good man was suffocated with wrath and fear.

“ If any one can tell — if any one can tell lies like that, to ruin an honest man! If any one can say — ”

To no purpose did he protest; he was not believed.



## PLOT ---

He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his declaration. They insulted each other for a whole hour. At his own request, Master Hauchecorne was searched. They found nothing on him. At last the mayor, being sorely perplexed, discharged him, but warned him that he proposed to inform the prosecuting attorney's office and to ask for orders.

[L 4.] The news had spread. On leaving the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded and questioned with serious or bantering curiosity, in which, however, there was no trace of indignation. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He went his way, stopping his acquaintances, repeating again and again his story and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him:

" You old rogue ! "

And he lost his temper, lashing himself into a rage, feverish with excitement, desperate because he was not believed, at a loss what to do, and still telling his story.

Night came. He must needs go home. He started with three neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string: and all the way he talked of his misadventure.

During the evening he made the circuit of the village of Breauté, in order to tell everybody about it. He found none but incredulous listeners.

He was ill over it all night.

[L 5.] The next afternoon, about one o'clock, Marius Paumelle, a farmhand employed by Master Breton, a

## THE SHORT STORY

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farmer of Ymauville, restored the wallet and its contents to Master Houlbrequé of Manneville.

The man claimed that he had found it on the road; but, being unable to read, he had carried it home and given it to his employer.

The news soon became known in the neighborhood; Master Hauchecorne was informed of it. He started out again at once, and began to tell his story, now made complete by the denouement. He was triumphant.

"What made me feel bad," he said, "wasn't so much the thing itself, you understand, but the lying. There's nothing hurts you so much as being blamed for lying."

All day long he talked of his adventure; he told it on the roads to people who passed; at the wine-shop to people who were drinking; and after church on the following Sunday. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. His mind was at rest now, and yet something embarrassed him, although he could not say just what it was. People seemed to laugh while they listened to him. They did not seem convinced. He felt as if remarks were made behind his back.

[*Cul.*] On Tuesday of the next week, he went to market at Goderville, impelled solely by the longing to tell his story.

Malandain, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him coming. Why?

He accosted a farmer from Criquetot, who did not let him finish, but poked him in the pit of his stomach, and shouted in his face:

"Go on, you old fox!" Then he turned on his heel.

Master Hauchecorne was speechless, and more and more disturbed. Why did he call him "old fox?"

## PLOT

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When he was seated at the table, in Jourdain's inn, he set about explaining the affair once more.

A horse-trader from Montivilliers called out to him:

"Nonsense, nonsense, you old dodger! I know all about your string!"

"But they've found the wallet!" faltered Hauchecorne.

"None of that, old boy; there's one who finds it, and there's one who carries it back. I don't know just how you did it, but I understand you."

The peasant was fairly stunned. He understood at last. He was accused of having sent the wallet back by a confederate, an accomplice.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, but left the inn amid a chorus of jeers.

He returned home, shamefaced and indignant, suffocated by wrath, by confusion, and all the more cast down because, with his Norman cunning, he was quite capable of doing the thing with which he was charged, and even of boasting of it as a shrewd trick. He had a confused idea that his innocence was impossible to establish, his craftiness being so well known. And he was cut to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

[F 1.] Thereupon he began once more to tell of the adventure, making the story longer each day, adding each time new arguments, more forcible protestations, more solemn oaths, which he devised and prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being wholly engrossed by the story of the string. The more complicated his defence and the more subtle his reasoning, the less he was believed.

## THE SHORT STORY

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“Those are liar’s reasons,” people said behind his back.

He realized it; he gnawed his nails, and exhausted himself in vain efforts.

He grew perceptibly thinner.

Now the jokers asked him to tell the story of The Piece of String for their amusement, as a soldier who has seen service is asked to tell about his battles. His mind, attacked at its source, grew feebler.

Late in December he took to his bed.

In the first days of January he died, and in the delirium of the death-agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

“A little piece of string — a little piece of string — see, here it is, m’sieu’ mayor.”

### THE PLOT DIAGRAM FOR “THE PIECE OF STRING.”

#### I. Preliminary Situation.

1. *Time* — *The present.*
2. *Place* — *Goderville, a French village, on market day.*
3. *Tone* — *Serious.*

#### II. Initial Incident — Master Hauchecorne’s finding the piece of string.

#### III. The Ladder of Rising Action.

- L1. *The crier’s announcement of the lost purse.*
- L2. *The arrest of Hauchecorne.*
- L3. *The examination before the mayor.*
- L4. *Those attending the market believe him to be guilty.*
- L5. *The purse found and returned, but still the neighbors doubt his innocence, and he worries.*

## PLOT

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IV. Culmination. Hauchecorne's failure to establish a belief in his innocence on the next market day. He is stunned by the shock.



V. Falling Action.

*F1. Gradual disintegration under the constant accusation of his neighbors.*

VI. Conclusion. The death of Master Hauchecorne.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

The reader should set himself the task of making a plot analysis, representing the action by a diagram and accompanying explanatory notes, for two or three stories recently read. In doing this for the first time a story in which the steps are represented by external incidents, rather than by internal mental or spiritual growth or disintegration, should be chosen. For this reason the beginner should try Maupassant's *The Necklace*, rather than such stories as his *The Coward*, or Stevenson's *Markheim*. Objective stories rather than subjective should be selected for analysis so long as the student is new to the study.



## THE SHORT STORY

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Make a careful observation of the kinds of incidents which the writers choose as suitable for the purposes of fiction. You will probably notice that the great writers use simple incidents, discarding such matter as would make a sensational news story for the daily papers. The unpracticed writer is likely to select something unusual or startling for his plot, believing that a set of incidents would naturally make a good story because they had actually happened somewhere. He is prone to believe, too, that something that happened a long time ago or in some far away place is much more interesting than the simple occurrences of his own town or county. A skillful writer recognizes that many incidents which make interesting reading in the columns of a newspaper have no "fictional value." This may be due to the fact that the set of incidents do not illustrate any phase of life, cannot carry a theme, or that the facts are so much truer than fiction that they do not bear the appearance of truth, verisimilitude.

In your reading observe the plots carefully to see whether the writer gets his materials from a source near at hand, and whether he selects the simple incidents rather than the remote and complex.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHARACTERS

**S**INCE the Short Story has for its main purpose the exhibition of some phase of life, usually human life, it follows that characters must be selected and used in some plot in order to embody the theme. An essayist might in an abstract philosophical essay show that a certain thing is true about humanity, and do it without using characters, but the materials of the story-teller are people — concrete things, and not abstract observations. The story writer chooses a theme, makes a plan, and then selects his people. He may not proceed in this order but these three things he has to do.

#### HOW MANY CHARACTERS

The story is short in the actual number of words. The theme may be a great one — some profound life truth — but the author must embody even such a theme in three or four thousand words. The lower limit is about one thousand, and the upper, seven. Of course there are a few stories that fall below a thousand words and some which go beyond seven thousand — even as high as ten thousand — but these are unusual. The writer of a Short Story wishes, of course, to make his theme stand out as clearly as possible and to make the truth of it convincing; yet he must do this in about three or four thousand words. To do so he must draw

## THE SHORT STORY

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upon every resource at his command to produce intensity, and at the same time practice a rigid economy in the use of means. These necessities seem to oppose each other and to place the author in a dilemma, but in reality they work together. The author who succeeds in placing one or two characters in a single tense situation so as to produce conviction of the truth of his theme really gains in intensity of impression over the novelist who may use a wider range of characters and plot incidents.

In practice the story writers have found themselves most successful when they have employed one or two or three characters. *The Prodigal Son* has three characters, all necessary; Poe's *Ligeia* has only two real people; Stevenson's *Markheim* has but two, only one of these being significant.

### WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE

In the first place, the characters must be real people — not abstract qualities in human form and name, nor mere types. They must be and act like the people one meets in the actual world. Most people are so constituted that in a given situation they will act just as one might expect them to act. Their actions should be consistent with their predominant traits of character. Still, human beings have personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies which must be taken into the account. They do not always act alike in like situations. The author who creates a character whose conduct can be accurately predicted by the reader from the beginning has not drawn a man or woman, but a type. To be real, characters must be both typical and individual — and *individual first*.

## THE CHARACTERS

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### THE CHARACTERS MUST BE WORTH KNOWING

Either the character must be unusual, such a person as we do not commonly have the opportunity of meeting; or if he is such a one as we meet every day, we must in print meet him in some striking situation not frequent in every-day experience. If he is an ordinary person, and the plot-incidents ordinary too, the story writer has just one possible excuse left for bringing his character into print. He can reveal the deep impressions which such experiences make on such people — impressions intellectual or emotional — which lie too deep to appear to a casual observer at a chance meeting.

### UNUSUAL PEOPLE

For most of us the points of contact with life are limited in number, and we are not conceited enough to regard "The rustic cackle of our bourg, the murmur of the mighty world." We welcome the readings of life which the skilled observer and interpreter can bring to us from his part of the world of experience. There are portions of the world that we cannot visit and could not understand if we were there. There are levels of society too high and levels too low for some of us. There are some people whom we cannot meet face to face and know intimately, and others whom we would not meet if we could; but in our own rooms, being properly introduced by the story teller, we may consort with principalities and powers and not feel out of place, or with knights and ladies of low degree, or no degree, and profit by the meeting. The writers of stories make such meetings possible for us.

## THE SHORT STORY

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### PEOPLE IN UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

As with the characters, so it is with situations. We are all earth-bound. We cannot go everywhere; we cannot see everything that we should be interested in, if we could meet those situations as first-hand experiences. But as readers we can make servants of authors and ask them to see for us and show us their characters as they pass through experiences that we cannot have. Having a thousand of these trained observers at our command the world over, we can draw upon their knowledge of things and people and emotions beyond our range of experience. If they deal with the commonest situations of life, they have yet a means of instructing us, for they can give us interpretations of life that lie beneath the surface of things observed. They can present a condensation and simplification of actual life that is more illuminating than the casual experiences of life can possibly be to us.

### UNUSUAL IMPRESSIONS OF CHARACTERS AND LIFE

Then, too, we must remember that every effect of experience with life does not show upon the countenance of the chance-met person. If you go out upon the street, you may meet a man or woman who has just passed through some tragic hour of intellectual or emotional experience, and yet you may not be aware of it from any look or action. They may show no outward sign of the stirred depths — at least no sign that you or I can read. Here the trained interpreter steps in and sees for us and makes us see. The writer of fiction also can, from his knowledge of life, set up a problem in imagination and ask himself what would happen if certain characters



## THE CHARACTERS

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with certain characteristics should go through certain physical, mental, or emotional experiences; and to answer his question he may construct an imagined plot to show the result, thus making a piece of fiction, a story.

### CONDENSATIONS OF EXPERIENCE

In actual life there are no sharp beginnings and no sudden endings such as we see in fiction. Seldom does a series of events happen in a continuous sequence without irrelevant digressions, so as to make a unified plot with the emphases in the right places. A man's acts and the things that happen to him depend, more or less, on what he has been already, and the kind of experiences he has passed through. Sharp and sudden beginnings do not occur in life as they must appear to occur in fiction. Significant experiences in life do not end suddenly, but continue to exert an influence after a given series has apparently terminated. While events are occurring which might be wrought into the plot of a story, there are many other experiences of the character which have nothing to do with those of the story plot. The writer of a Short Story disregards all the experiences except those which pertain to the plot. He rearranges even those that he retains so as to present them in the order which will most emphatically impress his theme. He takes notice of only those characters who enact the scenes in his plot. This service to the reader may be fitly termed Simplification of life, Elimination of the irrelevant incidents and characters, and Condensation of diffused experience. It is a simple thing to say that this is what the author does for us, but this is the great task in plot making.

## THE SHORT STORY

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### CHARACTER PORTRAYAL AND DEVELOPMENT

The brevity of the Short Story prevents much development of character. In people who are possessed of characters worthy of study, such changes as make or mar a character do not ordinarily occur within the space of time occupied by a Short Story. Exaltation or disintegration of character is a slow process, but it may have been going on unseen for a long time like the preparation of a calendar clock to change the figures on the dial. The story writer may begin his narrative just before the change occurs, and in his fiction hurry the character through the series of experiences up to the tense moment when the change becomes apparent, and in this way show actual development of character by seizing upon what the evolutionists in biology call the "transmutation period." While this process is possible, it is not the most common manner of treating character in the Short Story. Development of character is managed with greater skill in the novel, for in a book the author has leisure and room to develop his characters naturally, using no hot-house forcing process. The *portrayal* of character is, more properly, the business of the story writer. This consists of showing what the character *is* in a given situation. It is, in fact, the process of painting a portrait that reveals the character as he really is at the time of the culmination of the story, and not an attempt to use the process of the moving picture machine and show the evolution of character.

### THE TWO METHODS OF DELINEATING CHARACTER

There are two methods of delineating character, commonly designated by the terms *direct* and *indirect*. The

## THE CHARACTERS

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direct method calls for simple description; while the indirect allows the character to reveal himself in what he says and does. Of course the direct method is the easier of the two, but by no means the more effective, unless used by a master artist. When Arthur Morrison says in the second paragraph of his story, *On the Stairs*, "Three flights up, a gaunt woman with bare forearms stayed on her way to listen at a door," he is directly describing Mrs. Manders. But when he lets us become acquainted with her by means of what she says in such a speech as this, "Ah, well, we all of us comes to it some day, sooner or later, and it's often a 'appy release," he is effectively using the indirect method of character revelation. By the direct method we have learned something of her appearance, and now by the indirect we have come to know a little about her philosophy of life. Another resource of the indirect method is the opportunity which it possesses of interpreting the speeches of the characters by means of the remarks which the author combines with the speeches. Notice the effect of the following speech and remark from Mr. Morrison's story. "When I lost my pore 'usband," said the gaunt woman, *with a certain brightening*, "I give 'im a 'an'-some funeral." The author here tells us how Mrs. Manders *looked* when she made that speech, and thus gives us a better opportunity of knowing her than the mere speech in black and white could have given — the same, in fact, that we might have had if we could have seen her as she said the words.

It would be a mistake to assume that a writer chooses one of these methods to the exclusion of the other. One may feel a preference for one method or the other, but

## THE SHORT STORY

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in practice, for the sake of variety, both would be freely intermingled. The writer who feels that he is particularly successful in hitting off a character in a few well chosen descriptive sentences would naturally prefer to use the direct method. The indirect would appeal to one who is especially skillful in writing conversation. But neither could afford to use his own way exclusively.

The older method of writing a long and detailed description of a character before presenting the character in speech and action is seldom seen in modern stories. The practice now is to present the character in a descriptive sentence or two, and then show him in some characteristic action and speeches; and after a time, again to drop in a line or two of direct delineation, continuing this process until the reader comes to feel that he knows the character in the same way that he comes to know people in real life.

There is an interesting variation of the indirect method that should be touched upon before the subject is dismissed. Sometimes an author lets a character make his impression upon you by showing you how he has impressed other characters in the story. There are two ways of doing this. The first of these is to allow the characters to talk about some one who is absent, and so introduce the absent one to the reader. The other device is to show the reader the *effect* the character has upon others. Both of these are shown in the following excerpts from Richard Harding Davis' *A Derelict*. A group of newspaper reporters are talking about Channing, the derelict.

One of the *World* men looked up and laughed.

"I wonder if he'll run across Channing out there,"



## THE CHARACTERS

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he said. The men at the table smiled, a kindly, indulgent smile. The name seemed to act upon their indignation as a shower upon the close air of a summer day.

"That's so," said Norris. "He wrote me last month from Port-au-Prince that he was moving on to Jamaica. He said that he was at that moment introducing the president to a new cocktail, and as he had no money to pay his passage to Kingston, he was trying to persuade him to send him on there as his Haitian Consul. He said in case he couldn't get appointed Consul he had an offer to go as cook on an oil tramp."

The men around the table laughed. It was the pleased, proud laugh that flutters the family dinner-table when the infant son and heir says something precocious and impudent.

. . . . .

"I never saw a man who wouldn't help Charlie along or lend him a dollar." He glanced at the faces about him and then winked at the Boston man. "They all of them look guilty, don't they?" he said.

"Charlie Channing," murmured the baseball reporter, gently, as though he were pronouncing the name of a girl. He raised his glass. "Here's to Charlie Channing," he repeated. Norris set down his empty glass and showed it to the Boston man.

"That's his only enemy," he said. "Write! Heavens, how that man can write!"

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Examine the characters in the stories you read to determine:

1. How many significant characters.
2. Whether they are real people, or types of humanity or personified qualities or mere figures.
3. Whether they are worth knowing and why.
4. Whether they are unusual in any way. In what way?



## THE SHORT STORY

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5. Whether they are exhibited in situations in which the reader would not be likely to have a chance to associate with them. Explain.

6. Whether the author has revealed in his characters qualities, experiences, or emotions which the chance observer would have no opportunity of knowing about. What these are.

7. Whether the author has condensed the experiences of a long time into a brief narration. If so, show how this is true.

8. Whether there is mere character portrayal, or development or disintegration of character as well.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REMAINING MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME: SETTING — EMOTION — TONE — STYLE — APPEARANCE OF TRUTH

PLOT and character, the two most important of the author's means for the exhibition of his theme, have each required a short chapter for their treatment. The remaining five in a first study of fiction, such as this is, may be included in a single chapter.

#### SETTING

In a story like *The Prodigal Son* there is no attempt to establish time and place, but Arthur Morrison's *On the Stairs* is a "tale of a mean street" in modern London. Its setting is as definite as the setting of a play in which painted scenery, costumes, supernumeraries, and manners, all help the words to say "these incidents took place in a certain place at a definite time." The manner of *The Prodigal Son* implies an oriental setting — "somewhere east of Suez," — but as for definite setting of time and place, there is none. Only recently, in fact, have writers of stories come to recognize the value of background. Millet in painting his *Angelus* might have shown upon a bare white canvas a man and woman standing in prayer, and might even thus have given us a picture with a large meaning; but what a richness of associated ideas comes to it when we see back of the two figures the stretch of brown field, the distant shadowy

## THE SHORT STORY

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trees, the spire of the church, and the evening glow in the sky! Background for a story serves the same purpose as background in a picture, or the setting of a drama — painted scenery, costumes, properties, comment of secondary characters, movement of supernumeraries, etc. It suggests, maybe actually designates, time, place, tone, and atmosphere.

### EMOTION

In the chapter on story themes the matter of the kinds of emotions, such as love, fear, jealousy, hope, joy, etc. was given some consideration. A word needs to be added here about the use of emotion in the mechanical arrangement of the story. The story should be so arranged as to show an increase in the intensity of the emotion up to the point of the culmination of the plot. The highest point of emotional intensity should coincide with the top-most step of the plot-ladder — the point where the plot-problem is solved, the major knot untied or cut (to employ the terms of another writer). If these points do not coincide, if the emotion reaches its height before the plot culmination is reached, or afterward, the effect produced is disconcerting. Interest falls off if the emotional height is reached too early; and you feel the incongruity of an emotional culmination coming after the turn in the plot and during the part of the action that falls away toward the well-rounded conclusion.

### TONE

We all recognize in the best stories a certain unity of tone. The story may be tragic, humorous, keenly witty, satirical, ironical, sombre, joyous, foreboding, or serious; and in keeping with the key-note the author

## MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

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succeeds usually in making the setting or background of his story reflect the kind of atmosphere which would be consonant with the tone.

The tone of a story is usually indicated in the opening sentences. These strike, as one might say, the key-note of the whole composition. Notice the indications of gloom and forebodings of impending disaster in the opening paragraphs of Poe's, *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Now, the important thing in the matter of tone is unity. One would be shocked in reading such a story as this of Poe's if a ludicrous incident were inserted a third of the way from the beginning, and further on a descriptive paragraph picturing a beautiful summer evening, with soft moonlight and the scent of honeysuckle enveloping a romantic young pair in the park beside the decaying house of Usher.

Unity of Tone does not, however, preclude variety, as one might suppose. Life is not sympathetic with the emotions of human beings unless by mere coincidence. A story in which the prevailing tone is that of apprehension of calamity might have some speeches which are hilariously humorous, if the speeches were made by some one unaware of the danger, or by a hysterical character, or by one who had become careless of consequences or who wished to dispel the apprehensiveness of others. The Drunken Porter Scene in *Macbeth* and the speeches of Tom of Bedlam in the Storm Scene in *King Lear* are examples of diversity of tone in drama. These examples show that the contrast in tone felt so keenly by the audience or reader does not, in fact, break the unity, but deepens the feeling of tragedy induced by the whole piece.

## THE SHORT STORY

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It is, however, much more difficult to insert a note of seriousness or tragedy into a piece of literature the prevailing tone of which is light or humorous. The effect is usually one of incongruity, and is not convincing. An attempt at seriousness by some one of the characters in a story of light tone may be used effectively by contrast to augment the fun made by the others. The seriousness of Mrs. Hilary in Anthony Hope's, *The House Opposite* is contrasted with the levity of Hilary and Mr. Carter. The unity of tone, that of humorous levity, is maintained as the total effect of the story. Read Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *Goliath*, and try to determine what devices are employed to maintain the tone of mock seriousness in this story, which on the surface promises to be tragic.

Finally, the effect of tone should not be monotony but rather the production of unity by means of the harmonious employment of variety.

### STYLE

Style is a quality in composition about which a great deal has been said in a general way, but it is incapable of simple technical analysis. In one sense — that in which it is conceived by Robert Louis Stevenson, the novelist, in his essay *On Style in Literature* in *Essays and Reviews*, and by Clayton Hamilton, the critic, in his *Materials and Methods of Fiction* — the laws of style may be determined and arranged. For to Mr. Hamilton prose style means the manner of composition which produces the effects which distinguish literary prose from mere informational writing such as one expects in reading a treatise, say, on Nature's Ways of Scattering Seeds. This is a real distinction, and to produce the artistic



## MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

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effects of literary prose a writer, instinctively or consciously, employs certain poetic combinations of speech sounds, certain orderings of words and phrases in his sentences, certain figures of speech (poetic in their associations), all of which produce a pleasurable stimulation of the aesthetic sense of the reader and satisfy the demands of art in harmony, proportion, and restraint. Mr. Hamilton would say, then, that a writer has style, or has no style.

But most readers and critics understand the term style to mean the *individual manner* of a writer. Accepting this statement, one might speak of a style as being good or tolerable or downright bad; as being poetic, straightforward, terse, nervous, bald, florid, or any one of a dozen other descriptive terms. One might compare the style of one author with another. The student of a Short Story might examine it for the peculiarities of composition which distinguish the compositions of its author from those of others. Peculiarities of sentence arrangement, of word order, and of phrase-making might be noticed. The fondness of the author for certain words, or certain similes and metaphors; his taste for poetic words — poetic on account of their associations or on account of their sound — onomatopoeia, assonance, alliteration, parallel and balanced structure; these, or their lack, and many other individual characteristics mark the composition of one author as different from another. Differences in manner make it possible for a reader to recognize a certain author by his writing. Since these will occur to the student as he reads the stories, no special purpose could be effectively served by an attempt to catalog them.

## THE SHORT STORY

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### APPEARANCE OF TRUTH

One of the commonest mistakes of the amateur story writer is to select his incidents from actual life, believing that he will thus produce a convincing piece of fiction. It is very often harder to make a strange thing that has actually happened seem really true than it is to invent a series of events and breathe into them the breath of real life. Many a one has a few stories which he hesitates to tell except to friends who know him very well. These events, he knows, have actually happened, but he also knows them to be the kind of truths that are stranger than fiction. In a student's story which came to a teacher's desk recently for criticism there was a mystery to be solved. A young man in a hunting party had shot and killed a man with whom he had quarreled some time before. It looked like murder; but the young man protested that it was an accident, although he was unable to explain how it was possible for such a thing to happen. When the truth came out, it was learned that the young man was riding under a hickory tree when the shot was fired, and that a nut falling from the tree had hit the hair-trigger of his rifle and caused the fatality. In answer to the teacher's objection to this incident on the ground of improbability the student said: "I know of a case where this actually happened." Maybe so, but what a strain upon one's credulity! It can hardly be made to seem true. What we have here would be an accident not likely to happen to one man in a million riding under that hickory tree with a gun in his hand. It is not, however, impossible to use actual incidents. James B. Connolly says of his own employment of facts: "Most of the stories I have written have been founded on facts.

## MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

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I start with a fact. Something happens in life, and sets a man thinking; and to account for it he builds up his own theory, supplying motives, action, and result, out of his own knowledge of life." Mr. Connolly begins with a fact and then builds upon it, as all writers of fiction do, supplying from imagination where the facts are insufficient for the illumination of the theme, leaving out what would obscure the appearance of truth, and arranging what is left in a sequence that will give the whole matter an air of truth not originally a part of the actual fact or facts. In fiction the Actual is of much less importance than the Appearance of Truth — verisimilitude.

### SOME DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

*Realism and Romance.*— Each of these terms, Realism and Romance, has a meaning to most readers which conforms pretty closely to the generally accepted meaning; and yet the connotation of the words differs with individual readers. Writers were once distinguished as *Classic* or *Romantic*. Those who looked back to the age of the classics for themes, treatment, literary conventions, and rules of construction were called Classic writers; and those who flouted the classic rules and traditions, and looked into the remote in time and place for their plots, and to no authority for their manner of treatment were called Romantic.

These terms have been discarded in their original applications but *Romance* still has a shadow of its original meaning. It also means much more. It means freedom from restraint, warmth of treatment, breadth of imagination, and protest against the obvious and the

## THE SHORT STORY

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actual. This is not saying that all romantic fiction has all these qualities or that realistic fiction has none of them, but that a piece in which these qualities predominate is designated as Romantic.

*Realism* in fiction has been defined negatively by Bliss Perry in the following terms: "Realistic fiction is that which does not shrink from the commonplace or from the unpleasant in its effort to depict things as they are, life as it is." To say the same thing the other way about: Realistic fiction seeks to present a picture of things as they are, and life as it is. In doing so the writer often has to include the commonplace and the unpleasant. The temperate realist is careful, however, to keep the unpleasant and the commonplace in fiction within the proportions which they occupy in real life.

*Idealism and Symbolism.*—*Idealism* in fiction is an attempt to see things as they should be. The writer may in the main follow either the romantic plan or the realistic. If, as a Realist, he deals with the actual, he eliminates or disregards the imperfections. If he is romantic, his imagination neglects those elements which would mar the perfect creation.

*Symbolism.*—In either romantic or realistic literature there may be a mystic or a hidden meaning below the obvious meaning. This is seen more often in poetry and the drama than in short stories. Spenser's, *Faerie Queene* has a series of such meanings. Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King* is a series of romantic pieces dominated by a symbolistic meaning. William Butler Yeats presents *Kathleen ni Houlihan* as Ireland herself in her struggle for liberty, as does also Lady Gregory in *The Rising of the Moon*. These plays are at once realistic,



## MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

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idealistic, and symbolic. *The Idylls of the King* are romantic, idealistic, and symbolic.

### DISTINCTIONS IN TERMS

The opposing terms are Realism and Romance. Idealism and Symbolism may be associated with either, though as a matter of fact they more often go with Romance.

Realism and Romance are terms used to designate the *method* which an author adopts. Idealism is an end to be attained, and it may be attained by an author using either method. Symbolism is a *device*, and may be associated with either method of writing in connection with idealism or without it.

The way to learn to recognize these qualities in fiction is not through definitions, or enumerations of the qualities of each, but by reading widely until one gets a feeling for Realism, and Romance, and so becomes able to identify them by means of their total impression, as one recognizes an acquaintance, and not by means of conformity to a list of distinctive attributes or qualities.

### THE SHORT STORY, THE NOVELETTE, AND THE NOVEL

Since the terms, *Short Story*, *Novelette*, and *Novel* are used to distinguish the forms of fiction which one meets in his reading, an effort should be made here to distinguish them, one from the other.

“The *Short Story* aims to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis.” — *Clayton Hamilton in the Bookman, February, 1904.*

The *Novelette* borrows from the technic of both the story and the novel. From the story it gets the idea of



## THE SHORT STORY

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a single plot without digressions, but it does not employ the greatest economy of means to produce an effect. Like the novel it may use a larger number of incidents in its plot structure than the story, and each of these incidents may be more fully developed through conversation, narration, and description. In the main, however, a novelette is more like a story than a novel. It is, in fact, as it is sometimes called, a "long-short."

*The Novel* may have a main plot and one or more sub-plots in parallel or contrast to the main plot. One or more characters in each sub-plot may play a part or parts in the main plot and so tie the two, three, or four separate actions into a unified whole. In working out his design the novelist may use many incidents in depicting or developing his characters, or in working out his theme. He may use a more deliberate method in reporting the conversations, letting them work out in full. The story writer at best can give only significant "samples" of the talk. Many characters may be used in a novel, and to produce a given effect the writer may let one set of characters work through a scene, and then, for fear that the impression has not been made strong enough, he may have other groups go through similar processes with other sets of incidents. The story writer, practicing the utmost economy of his means, may make but a single trial at producing a given impression.

### REFERENCES

- Hamilton, Clayton. *Materials and Methods of Fiction*, Doubleday, Page and Company, Chapter x.  
Perry, Bliss. *A Study of Prose Fiction*, Houghton, Mifflin Company, Chapters x and xi.

## MEANS USED IN DEVELOPING A THEME

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Since the purpose of this chapter is to present definitions and distinctions, no detailed study of stories is attached. It seems more logical to apply these technical distinctions to each of the stories used in the second part of the book for careful study.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

#### POINT OF VIEW

STUDENTS of fiction recognize four distinct points of view which the author may choose from. 1. The first person. He may choose to tell his story as if he were the chief character or some character of secondary importance who looks on and reports what the more important characters do and say. 2. The limited third person. He may represent himself as an interested observer, looking on and giving an account of what an on-looker could see and know. 3. The omniscient third person. From this point of view the author may tell everything that happens everywhere, even what the characters are thinking, the motives back of the thoughts, and the philosophy of life which accounts for the motives. 4. Diaries or letters, or entries in a diary only occasionally and for the sake of variety. Success in this form is elusive. Perhaps the best known story in the form of letters is Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *Majorie Daw*, and the most skillful performance with a series of documents of various sorts is Brander Matthews' *The Documents in the Case*.

Combinations of two or more of the four points of view are not unusual. In a narrative written in the first or third person letters and papers are frequently introduced; and in the letter form, narrative from the point

## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

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of view of the first or third person is nearly always resorted to in getting over some situation hard to make clear by means of the letters. *Marjorie Daw* is brought to a close by using narrative in the third person.

Each of these points of view has some distinctive advantage and some disadvantages. If the story is in the first person and the narrator is the chief character, it is not in very good taste for him to tell how he bore himself in some test of skill, or wit, or courage. The device adopted by most writers who wish to retain the vividness of first-hand narrative in an adventure story or story of triumph of intellect is to have the story told in the first person by an interested on-looker. Poe lets the husband of the heroine tell how by indomitable will Ligeia conquers death. Dr. Watson recounts the triumphs of Sherlock Holmes. David Balfour tells the remarkable encounters and victories of Allan Breck.

The use of the omniscient third person is the easiest method of all, but it is likely to miss the vividness that accompanies the face-to-face narration of one who saw and heard. There is a danger, too, of knowing so much, as this god-like abstraction looks down on his creatures and their works, that the story becomes unconvincing, even absurd. Skillfully used, however, as this method is by most of our best story writers, it is very effective.

The narrative in the limited third person, recounting only what some unseen interested observer could have seen, heard, and known, requires the greatest skill, and when well done is perhaps the most effective of all. In the limited third person the observer may be entirely outside the story, as he is in the omniscient third person, or the author may choose to see his characters through

## THE SHORT STORY

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the eyes of some secondary character in the story, and report (in the third person) only what that character could know or infer from what he saw and heard. In such a case the author's judgment of his characters would have to be in accord with the probable judgment such a character would form under the given conditions.

### TITLES

The purpose of a title is the same as that of a label on a package of merchandise offered for sale. It should be attractive, and should correctly characterize the contents of the story. To be attractive it should be short and definite, and worded so as to catch the attention through pleasing sound or some interesting turn of expression. In characterizing the contents the truth should be told as far as the title goes, but something should be left to imagination. *The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows* is a title rather longer than usual, but the wording is rhythmic, and the suggestion is of something dreamy and mysterious. A reader at all susceptible to suggestion could not pass such a label without investigating the contents of the package. Kipling's titles are usually of this compelling kind. Think of *The Man Who Would be King*, *The Man Who Was*, *Without Benefit of Clergy*, *The Courting of Dinah Shad*, *The Brushwood Boy*, and *They*. Contrast such titles as *A Branch Road*, *A Kentucky Cardinal*, *Goliath*, *Fame's Little Day*, with titles like *An Experience on a Vacation*, *Margaret's Duty* or *How She Saved the Train*, *The Difficulties of Building a Railroad in Uganda*, and *Patty's Perilous Predicament*.

A whole chapter might be written on what to avoid and what effects to strive for in selecting a title for a



## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

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story. For the student, however, the better practice is to examine many stories and try to discover what attracts, what repels, and what leaves one merely uninterested.

### BEGINNINGS

Two distinct methods of making beginnings are employed. The writer knows that there are facts which the reader must know before the story can actually be set into motion. If he begins with simple narrative, the story is likely to be slow in getting started. On the other hand the device of opening with a bit of attractive dialog can be successful only when the author succeeds in going forward. This is not easy, for the facts of time, place, characters, background, etc., must be presented, and they are not easily presented in dialog. Often after the opening dialog the writer halts the story to explain the situation, and sometimes the halt leaves the characters in an awkward suspense. Both plans have been used with success. In *The Whirligig of Life* "O. Henry" uses the natural order of preliminary situation in narrative, giving time and place and introducing the three characters and describing them; then follows the initial incident and the incidents which form the steps of the ladder leading up to the culmination.

See how briefly these preliminary facts are put before the reader.

Justice of the Peace Benaja Widdup sat in the door of his office. [First character.] Halfway to the Zenith the Cumberland range rose blue-gray in the afternoon haze. [Time and Place.] A speckled hen swaggered down the street of the settlement cackling foolishly. [Atmosphere and Background.]

## THE SHORT STORY

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Up the road came the sound of creaking axles, and then a slow cloud of dust, and then a bull-cart bearing Ransie Bilbro and his wife. [The other two characters.] The cart stopped at the justice's door, and the two climbed down. [Action.] Ransie was a narrow six feet of sallow brown skin and yellow hair. The imperturbability of the mountains hung upon him like a suit of armor. [Two sentences describing the chief male character.] The woman was calicoed, angled, snuff-brushed, and weary with unknown desires. Through it all gleamed a faint protest of cheated youth unconscious of its loss.

"We-all," said the woman, in a voice like the wind blowing through pine boughs, "wants a divo'ce." [Initial Incident.]

Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman in *The Revolt of Mother* begins with dialogue and carries on the conversation so deftly that by the introduction of a few comments and explanatory remarks the whole preliminary situation is made clear without a pause in the progress of the story:

"Father!"

"What is it?"

"What are them men diggin' over there in the field for?"

There was a sudden dropping and enlarging of the lower part of the old man's face, as if some heavy weight had settled therein; he shut his mouth tight and went on harnessing the great bay mare. He hustled the collar on with a jerk.

"Father!"

The dialogue, narrative, description, and author's comments are thus deftly woven together through two or three pages until the whole preliminary situation is

## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

made clear to the reader without delay or break in continuity.

From an observation of Poe on the purpose of fiction some recent writers have concluded that a hint of the nature of the story will always appear in the manner of the beginning — if the story is properly constructed. They say that a story of incident will begin with action; a story of character, with a bit of dialogue, revealing characteristics of the speakers; or a story of setting (background) with description.

While this is usually true of Poe's tales and stories it is not characteristic of stories by writers of today. Occasionally a writer instinctively feels the propriety of beginning in accordance with this principle and realizes what his story gains by the directness of approach involved in such a method. But an examination of a large number of stories does not show any uniformity of practice in this particular.

However, it may be said that a story is strengthened, if in the very beginning its end is clearly in the author's view, and if he can make his purpose clear to the reader. Any device, the one mentioned above, or another, which makes clear to the reader the purpose and end of the story is a valuable one, provided that it does not eliminate the element of suspense so necessary to plots of nearly every kind.

### CONVERSATION

Story writers seem more and more inclined to use the dramatic method of developing their plots. Some of the stories of Hawthorne and Poe are told almost entirely in narrative in the third person with very little conversation. Now and then a writer of current short stories

## THE SHORT STORY

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will allow his characters to tell everything in direct discourse, using almost no comment of the author, no description, and no simple narration. The mass of readers doubtless are strongly attracted to a story that shows much conversation as one glances through the pages, but this method — an imitation of the method of the playwright — may be no more than a passing vogue, as dialect was, only a very few years ago. The impression is abroad that recent stories are as much as seventy-five per cent conversation. An examination of a hundred recent stories by representative authors would probably show that not more than forty per cent of the words occur in the direct discourse. The other sixty per cent would be divided between author's comment on and explanation of the speeches, and narrative and descriptive paragraphs.

Recent stories show a decided increase in skill in handling the explanatory remarks which accompany the speeches. In their simplest form these are "he said," "said he," "she said," and "said she." Such remarks reveal nothing of character. The use of adverbs suggests the character, the temperament, the manners, and the mood of the speaker. The substitution of other words for *said* gives variety and may even take the place of description in drawing a character. The most recent development of this kind is the custom of omitting these remarks altogether wherever the speakers can be differentiated without them. This is the purely dramatic method, commendable if not made into a fad. It can be carried so far as to rob the story of much of the charm which the technic of fiction permits, but which that of drama denies.



## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

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### SUSPENSE

From the very beginning a story should be so planned that with a given set of characters in a given situation or series of incidents the outcome is inevitable. This does not imply, however, that the reader can accurately foresee from the initial incident what that outcome is to be. In fact, the element of suspense, of uncertainty of outcome, is one of the elements which contributes most to that increase of emotional tension induced by a good story as one approaches the culmination. The solution of the plot should come after some suspense and with a note of surprise, but should not be incredible. For, as one looks *back over* a well-constructed story, he should see that the culmination was not only natural but also carefully prepared for and held in suspense so as to produce a deeper impression through the suddenness of the well-prepared stroke.

### SUGGESTION AND RESTRAINT

One of the very noticeable differences in the manners of the amateur and the professional writers of stories is in the management of suggestion and restraint. It is well understood that economy is a very important element in the technic of the Short Story. Now, the unskillful writer feels obliged to go into detail in every portion of his story. Given the task of writing *The Whirligig of Life*, he would have made it something like this:

“As the Justice of the Peace of a little mountain settlement in Eastern Tennessee sat in the doorway of the cabin that served him as an office, toward the middle of a summer afternoon in the year of 19—, he was surprised to see in the distance beyond a turn of the road a



## THE SHORT STORY

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cloud of dust, indicating the approach of a wheeled vehicle. He hastily drew on his boots, for it was his custom to wear these articles of apparel (considered so necessary in localities nearer the centers of refinement), only during the few minutes in the week when he was engaged in the discharge of his official duties. In about five minutes he was able to discern the cause of the cloud of dust. An observer not a native of the place would have been surprised at the time required for the vehicle to round the turn in the narrow mountain road, little better than a path, but Benaja Widdup had lived there all his life, and his father and father's father before him. Instinctively he knew that the dust was being raised by an ox-cart, and so he was not surprised at all when he descried such a conveyance, drawn by the little red bull, which he knew belonged to a young man who lived in a small clearing six or seven miles up the trail toward the wooded heights of the Cumberlands, which in the afternoon haze would have made a beautiful picture for one who had the artistic temperament. But Benaja Widdup had it not; neither did Ransie Bilbro nor his wife Ariela, the occupants of the cart, for life to them was a dull reality. They depended for their livelihood upon the few acres of yellow-bladed corn that clung precariously to the clay hillside, and the game that could still be trapped or shot in the mountains. The cart drew up beside the door. Ransie threw the single rope line around the upright stick that stood in the center of the dashboard of the cart and climbed down on one side of the cart while his wife climbed down on the other, the little red bull browsing on a bunch of already half-stripped hazel bushes which grew beside the road."

## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

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The purpose of this long paragraph is to create the atmosphere for the story, to suggest time and place, and to introduce the characters. To do this nearly four hundred words are employed, and yet the picture lacks sharpness of outline. All the details are included that O. Henry used in the original. He employed only a hundred words for that part of the story. Compelled by the technical demands of the Short Story, he restrained any impulse toward using fulness of detail, and produced all the effects that fulness would seem to assure, by the employment of suggestion; and strange to say, the total impression is more definite than that produced by the long paragraph.

Take as a second illustration of the use of suggestion and restraint in the character descriptions in *The Whirligig of Life*. "Ransie was a narrow six feet of sallow brown skin and yellow hair. The imperturbability of the mountains hung upon him like a suit of armor. The woman was calicoed, angled, snuff-brushed, and weary with unknown desires. Through it all gleamed a faint protest of cheated youth, unconscious of its loss." Two characters done in fifty words. Imagine, if you can, how an amateur would have seized upon this opportunity to present full length, detailed portraits of these two characters. The method of O. Henry is like that of the cartoonist who gives in two or three strokes of his pencil the significant lines of a figure and allows the imagination to supply the rest.

Observe the description of the blind woman in Kipling's *They*, of Mrs. Bathurst in the story of that name, and of Karnehan in *The Man Who Would be King*. It is surprising how full these descriptions seem, and

## THE SHORT STORY

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how few words are actually found when you have summed them up. In these stories one may observe another device in the use of suggestion that has not yet been mentioned. This is the scattering of the descriptive phrases and sentences through the story, and thus strengthening the illusion of a portrait in detail.

All successful writers practice a rigid restraint in the use of incidents, in the dialogue, in their comment upon the action, and in every other means that they use, just as they do in these elements of technic which have been treated with considerable fulness in the foregoing paragraphs. The principal device which they use to avoid such a piling up of details as would dull the sharpness of outline in the total impression is skillful suggestion.

### ENDINGS

Two common methods of bringing a story to a close are employed by the most successful Short Story writers. The one terminates the story abruptly with the culmination of the plot, at the highest point of emotional interest. This is the method of Stevenson in *Markheim* and of Poe in *Ligeia*. The other passes over the culmination and in a quieter mood drops down to a well rounded conclusion. De Maupassant's, *The Piece of String* and "O. Henry's," *The Whirligig of Life* are so constructed. This falling action may be no more than a few lines and a single incident, or it may be as much as a third of the whole story. In *The Whirligig of Life* it is about one-sixth of the whole story. The culmination comes with the realization on the part of Ransie and Ariela that they really love each other and cannot live apart. The conclusion is the part of the story involving

## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS

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the re-marriage and setting out for the cabin in the mountains.

### REFERENCES

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xii. Hinds, Noble & Eldredge.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

The materials of this chapter are to be used in the studies which follow the reading of the stories which make up the remainder of the book.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PLAN FOR THE STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

**T**HE questions which follow are intended to suggest a series of topics so arranged as to give a complete review of the technic of a story. In applying the questions to a particular story, care should be taken to avoid an application so literal as to deaden your interest in the story itself. If a written review is attempted, these questions should be used as topics for paragraphs. The whole review when complete should be in the form of a paper such as one would be willing to present as a part of a program in a literary club.

1. Write a brief synopsis of the story, using not more than three paragraphs — fewer if possible.

2. What is the theme? Is the theme true? Does the author believe it to be true, or is it only a possible fancy?

3. Outline the plot, showing (a) the preliminary situation, (b) the initial incident, (c) the incidents which form the steps in the ladder of rising action, (d) the culmination, (e) the steps in the falling action (if there are any), (f) the conclusion. (See the diagrams for plot outlines on page 41.)

4. What is the tone of the story: tragic, serious, humorous, farcical, poetic, dreamy? Use one of these or any other word that characterizes the tone.

5. Is this a story of Character, Incident, or Setting?



## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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6. Make a list of the characters.

a. The principal characters.

b. Those of secondary importance.

c. Those used merely as background, if there are any such.

7. Which of the characters have distinct individuality? Are any merely personified types of some quality or passion, such as greed, jealousy, hate, etc.? Are there any merely impersonal figures?

8. In delineating character does the author describe them (direct delineation), or does he make the character reveal himself in speech and action (indirect delineation)? If he uses both methods, which is predominant?

9. Are the characters true to life; are they better or worse than people in actual life; or are they caricatures (with actual characteristics exaggerated) of people such as one might know in actual life?

10. Is there any character, speech, or situation that does not seem true to life?

11. Does the emotional tension increase and the story move with increasing rapidity as the culmination is approached?

12. Is the setting interesting for its own sake, or is it used merely as a background for the characters and incidents?

13. What seems to have suggested the title?

14. Is the author's point of view:

a. The First Person?

b. The Limited Third Person?

c. The Omniscient Third Person?

d. Letters or a Diary?

e. A Combination of two or more of these?

## THE SHORT STORY

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15. What method of beginning is employed?

16. Does the author ever insert his own opinion into the story independent of the characters? Give examples.

17. About what per cent of the words occur in direct discourse? What per cent in simple narrative? What per cent in description?

18. Are there any unrelated episodes — incidents that do not aid in developing the plot?

19. How much time elapses in the working out of the plot? Account for the time scheme in detail.

20. Is the author's method that of the realist or romantic? In connection with your comment on his method make note of idealism, or symbolism, or both.

21. Make note of any effects of style which are pleasing. Any which are unpleasant. Any which are characteristic of or peculiar to the author.

22. The most effective short story is one that employs (1) characters highly worth knowing, and through these works out a great (2) theme upon a (3) stage (background or setting) suited to the (4) action and the people of the story. Does the story you are studying fall short in any of these four specifications?

### AN APPLICATION OF THE PLAN

### THE WHIRLIGIG OF LIFE \*

By O. Henry

Sydney Porter (1867-1911) "O. Henry," was born at Greensboro, North Carolina, and died in New York. He began his literary work as a newspaper writer in Texas. The settings

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## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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for his early stories are in the South and West, but in later years he drew his inspiration from the city about him. In the selection of themes, and in technical treatment he resembles Maupassant, and has been called the "American Maupassant."

Justice of the Peace Benaja Widdup sat in the door of his office. Halfway to the zenith the Cumberland range rose blue-gray in the afternoon haze. A speckled hen swaggered down the main street of the "settlement," cackling foolishly.

Up the road came a sound of creaking axles, and then a slow cloud of dust, and then a bull-cart bearing Ransie Bilbro and his wife. The cart stopped at the justice's door, and the two climbed down. Ransie was a narrow six feet of sallow brown skin and yellow hair. The imperturbability of the mountains hung upon him like a suit of armor. The woman was calicoed, angled, snuff-brushed, and weary with unknown desires. Through it all gleamed a faint protest of cheated youth unconscious of its loss.

The justice of the peace slipped his feet into his shoes, for the sake of dignity, and moved to let them enter.

"We-all," said the woman, in a voice like the wind blowing through pine boughs, "wants a divo'ce." She looked at Ransie to see if he noted any flaw or ambiguity or evasion or partiality or self-partisanship in her statement of their business.

"A divo'ce," repeated Ransie, with a solemn nod. "We-all can't git along together nohow. It's lonesome enough fur to live in the mount'ins when a man and a woman keers for one another. But when she's a-spittin' like a wildeat or a-sullenin' like a hoot-owl in the cabin, a man ain't got no call to live with her."

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ When he’s a no-’count varmint,” said the woman, without any especial warmth, “ a-traipsin’ along of sealawags and moonshiners and a-layin’ on his back pizen ’ith co’n whisky, and a-pesterin’ folks with a pack o’ hungry, triflin’ houn’s to feed! ”

“ When she keeps a-throwin’ skillet lids,” came Ransie’s antiphony, “ and slings b’ilin’ water on the best coon-dog in the Cumberlands, and sets herself agin’ cookin’ a man’s victuals, and keeps him awake o’ nights accusin’ him of a sight of doin’s! ”

“ When he’s al’ays a-fightin’ the revenues, and gits a hard name in the mount’ins fur a mean man, who’s gwine to be able fur to sleep o’ nights? ”

The justice of the peace stirred deliberately to his duties. He placed his one chair and a wooden stool for his petitioners. He opened his book of statutes on the table and scanned the index. Presently he wiped his spectacles and shifted his inkstand.

“ The law and the statutes,” said he, “ air silent on the subjeck of divo’ce as fur as the jurisdiction of this co’t air concerned. But, accordin’ to equity and the constitution and the golden rule, it’s a bad barg’in that can’t run both ways. If a justice of the peace can marry a couple, it’s plain that he is bound to be able to divo’ce ’em. This here office will issue a decree of divo’ce and abide by the decision of the Supreme Co’t to hold it good.”

Ransie Bilbro drew a small tobacco-bag from his trouser’s pocket. Out of this he shook upon the table a five-dollar note. “ Sold a b’arskin and two foxes fur that,” he remarked. “ It’s all the money we got.”

“ The regular price of a divo’ce in this co’t,” said the

## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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justice, "air five dollars." He stuffed the bill into the pocket of his homespun vest with a deceptive air of indifference. With much bodily toil and mental travail he wrote the decree upon half a sheet of foolscap, and then copied it upon the other. Ransie Bilbro and his wife listened to his reading of the document that was to give them freedom:

"Know all men by these presents that Ransie Bilbro and his wife, Ariela Bilbro, this day personally appeared before me and promises that hereinafter they will neither love, honor, nor obey each other, neither for better nor worse, being of sound mind and body, and accept summons for divorce according to the peace and dignity of the State. Herein fail not, so help you God. Benaja Widdup, justice of the peace in and for the county of Piedmont, State of Tennessee."

The justice was about to hand one of the documents to Ransie. The voice of Ariela delayed the transfer. Both men looked at her. Their dull masculinity was confronted by something sudden and unexpected in the woman.

"Judge, don't you give him that air paper yit. 'Tain't all settled, nohow. I got to have my rights first. I got to have my ali-money. 'Tain't no kind of a way to do fur a man to divo'ce his wife 'thout her havin' a cent fur to do with. I'm a-layin' off to be a-goin' up to brother Ed's up on Hogback Mount'in. I'm bound fur to hev a pa'r of shoes and some snuff and things besides. Ef Rance kin affo'd a divo'ce, let him pay me ali-money."

Ransie Bilbro was stricken to dumb perplexity. There had been no previous hint of alimony. Women were



## THE SHORT STORY

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already bringing up startling and unlooked-for issues. Justice Benaja Widdup felt that the point demanded judicial decision. The authorities were also silent on the subject of alimony. But the woman's feet were bare. The trail of Hogback Mountain was steep and flinty.

"Ariela Bilbro," he asked, in official tones, "how much did you 'low would be good and sufficient ali-money in the case befo' the co't?"

"I 'lowed," she answered, "fur the shoes and all, to say five dollars. That ain't much for ali-money, but I reckon that'll git me to up brother Ed's."

"The amount," said the justice, "air not onreasonable. Ransie Bilbro, you air ordered by the co't to pay the plaintiff the sum of five dollars befo' the decree of divo'ce air issued."

"I hain't no mo' money," breathed Ransie, heavily. "I done paid you all I had."

"Otherwise," said the justice, looking severely over his spectacles, "you are in contempt of co't."

"I reckon if you gimme till tomorrow," pleaded the husband, "I mout be able to rake or scrape it up somewhars. I never looked for to be a-payin' no ali-money."

"The case air adjourned," said Benaja, "till tomorrow, when you-all will present yo'selves and obey the order of the co't. Followin' of which the decrees of divo'ce will be delivered." He sat down in the door and began to loosen a shoestring.

"We mout as well go down to Uncle Ziah's," decided Ransie, "and spend the night." He climbed into the cart on one side, and Ariela climbed in on the other.

## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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Obeying the flap of his rope, the little red bull slowly came around on a tack, and the cart crawled away in the nimbus arising from its wheels.

Justice of the Peace Benaja Widdup smoked his elder-stem pipe. Late in the afternoon he got his weekly newspaper, and read it until the twilight dimmed its lines. Then he lit the tallow candle on his table, and read until the moon arose, marking the time for supper. He lived in the double log cabin on the slope near the girdled poplar. Going home to supper he crossed a little branch darkened by a laurel thicket. The dark figure of a man stepped from the laurels and pointed a rifle at his breast. His hat was pulled down low, and something covered most of his face.

"I want yo' money," said the figure, "'thout any talk. I'm gettin' nervous, and my finger's wabblin' on this here trigger."

"I've only got f-f-five dollars," said the justice, producing it from his vest pocket.

"Roll it up," came the order, "and stick it in the end of this here gun-bar'l."

The bill was crisp and new. Even fingers that were clumsy and trembling found little difficulty in making a spill of it and inserting it (this with less ease) into the muzzle of the rifle.

"Now I reckon you kin be goin' along," said the robber.

The justice lingered not on his way.

The next day came the little red bull, drawing the cart to the office door. Justice Benaja Widdup had his shoes on, for he was expecting a visit. In his presence Ransie Bilbro handed to his wife a five-dollar bill. The

## THE SHORT STORY

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official's eye sharply viewed it. It seemed to curl up as though it had been rolled and inserted into the end of a gun-barrel. But the justice refrained from comment. It is true that other bills might be inclined to curl.

He handed each one a decree of divorce. Each stood awkwardly silent, slowly folding the guarantee of freedom. The woman cast a shy glance full of constraint at Ransie.

"I reckon you'll be goin' back up to the cabin," she said, "along 'ith the bull-cart. There's bread in the tin box settin' on the shelf. I put the bacon in the b'ilin'-pot to keep the hounds from gettin' it. Don't forget to wind the clock tonight."

"You air a-goin' to your brother Ed's?" asked Ransie, with fine unconcern.

"I was 'lowin' to get along up thar afore night. I ain't sayin' as they'll pester theyselves any to make me welcome, but I hain't nowhar else fur to go. It's a right smart ways, and I reckon I better be goin'. I'll be a-sayin' good-bye, Ranse — that is, if you keer fur to say so."

"I don't know as anybody's a hound dog," said Ransie, in a martyr's voice, "fur to not want to say good-bye — 'less you air so anxious to git away that you don't want me to say it."

Ariela was silent. She folded the five-dollar bill and her decree carefully, and placed them in the bosom of her dress. Benaja Widdup watched the money disappear with mournful eyes behind his spectacles.

And then with his next words he achieved rank (as his thoughts ran) with either the great crowd of the

## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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world's sympathizers or the little crowd of its great financiers.

"Be kind o' lonesome in the old cabin tonight, Ranse," he said.

Ransie Bilbro stared out at the Cumberlands, clear blue now in the sunlight. He did not look at Ariela.

"I 'low it might be lonesome," he said; "but when folks gits mad and wants a divo'ce, you can't make folks stay."

"There's others wanted a divo'ce," said Ariela, speaking to the wooden stool. "Besides, nobody don't want nobody to stay."

"Nobody never said they didn't."

"Nobody never said they did. I reckon I better start on now to brother Ed's."

"Nobody can't wind that old clock."

"Want me to back along 'ith you in the cart and wind it fur you, Ranse?"

The mountaineer's countenance was proof against emotion. But he reached out a big hand and enclosed Ariela's thin brown one. Her soul peeped out once through her impassive face, hallowing it.

"Them hounds shan't pester you no more," said Ransie. "I reckon I been mean and low down. You wind that clock, Ariela."

"My heart hit's in that cabin, Ranse," she whispered, "along 'ith you. I ain't a-goin' to git mad no more. Le's be startin', Ranse, so's we kin git home by sun-down."

Justice of the Peace Benaja Widdup interposed as they started for the door, forgetting his presence.

"In the name of the State of Tennessee," he said,

## THE SHORT STORY

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"I forbid you-all to be a-defyin' of its laws and statutes.

"This co't is mo' than willin' and full of joy to see the clouds of discord and misunderstandin' rollin' away from two lovin' hearts, but it air the duty of the co't to p'eserve the morals and integrity of the state. The co't reminds you that you air no longer man and wife, but air divo'ced by regular decree, and as such air not entitled to the benefits and 'purtenances of the mattermonal estate."

Ariela caught Ransie's arm. Did those words mean that she must now lose him when they had just learned the lesson of life?

"But the co't air prepared," went on the justice, "fur to remove the disabilities set up by the decree of the divo'ce. The co't air on hand to perform the solemn ceremony of marri'ge, thus fixin' things up and enablin' the parties in the case to resume the honor'ble and elevatin' state of mattermony which they desires. The fee fur performin' said ceremony will be, in this case, to wit, five dollars."

Ariela caught the gleam of promise in his words. Swiftly her hand went to her bosom. Freely as an alighting dove the bill fluttered to the justice's table. Her sallow cheek colored as she stood hand in hand with Ransie and listened to the reuniting words.

Ransie helped her into the cart, and climbed in beside her. The little red bull turned once more, and they set out, hand-clasped, for the mountains.

Justice of the Peace Benaja Widdup sat in his door and took off his shoes. Once again he fingered the bill tucked down in his vest pocket. Once again the speckled



## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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hen swaggered down the main street of the "settlement," cackling foolishly.

1. *Synopsis.* Ransie and Ariela Bilbro apply to Benaja Widdup, a mountain justice of the peace, for a divorce. When they find that they can really be rid of each other, they are not so sure they want the divorce. Having paid all he had for the decree, Ransie has to wait till the following day before he can pay five dollars as alimony. That evening he robs the justice of the money he has just paid him. The next morning the two return to the justice's office and decide to go home together. The justice reminds them that they are divorced, but remarries them for the oft-exchanged five-dollar bill.

2. *Theme.* Divorce would often be unnecessary if the married pair could be made to forget their little annoyances, and realize their real affection for each other.

The author treats the subject as if he believed the supposition true; and one, as he reads, is convinced of its truth in this case, and perhaps pretty generally as well.

3. *Outline.* I. Preliminary Situation.

1. *Time* — *The present.*

2. *Place* — *The Tennessee mountains.*

3. *The characters introduced.*

II. Initial Incident — The application for a divorce.

III. The ladder.

L1. *The divorce granted and paid for.*

L2. *The demand for alimony.*

L3. *The robbery.*

IV. Culmination — The decision to go home together.

## THE SHORT STORY

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### V. Falling action.

#### *F1. The remarriage.*

### VI. Conclusion — Setting out for home.

4. *Tone.* Humorous with underlying seriousness.
5. This is a story of character.
6. a. Principal characters. Ransie and Ariela Bilbro.  
b. Secondary character. Benaja Widdup.
7. All of the characters have distinct individuality.
8. Some very brief but effective direct delineation of character is used, but the indirect method predominates.
9. All the characters are convincingly true to life.
10. All the characters, incidents, speeches, and situations seem to be true to the kind of life involved in this story.
11. There is no marked increase in speed or in emotional tension as the culmination is approached; but these mountaineers are slow of action and speech, and such an increase of speed and emotional tension would not seem natural in this story.
12. The setting is mere background, but an interesting one.
13. The title was apparently suggested by the swift revolution of the affections and plans of these two people.
14. The point of view is that of the omniscient third person.
15. The logical beginning is used.
16. The author does not insert any comment of his own.
17. The direct discourse is almost exactly fifty per cent. Description, narrative, and author's comment in about equal proportions make up the other fifty.

## PLAN FOR STUDY OF A SHORT STORY

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18. There are no unrelated episodes.

19. The time scheme makes an allowance for about twenty hours — from the arrival of the cart, in the middle of one afternoon to the departure for the cabin the next morning.

20. The author's method in this story is realistic, untouched by the mood of either idealism or symbolism.

21. "O. Henry's" style is that of a master of words. He uses dialect and makes it the actual speech of his characters. His use of humor that does not offend by dropping to the level of ridicule in a serious situation is pleasing. The descriptions are brief and rapid, but very clear and effective.

22. The characters are from lowly life, but are worth knowing. The situation is one of intense general interest. The setting is interesting and the incidents compel our attention. Perhaps one would not care to call this one of the very great stories, but it is a story of considerable worth.



**SHORT STORIES FOR STUDY**





## LIGEIA

By Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was the son of an actor and an actress, both of whom died when he was a child. He was adopted by John Allan, a business man of wealth, of Richmond, Virginia. Mr. Allan had Poe educated in private schools in Richmond and in England. As a young man he was a student in the University of Virginia and the Military Academy at West Point, but left both before graduating. His life was a series of unfortunate episodes due largely to lack of stability of character. He began to write very early, publishing *Tamerlane and Other Poems* in 1827; but he did not reach the height of his fame until he wrote *The Raven* (1845). Both before and after this he wrote both prose and verse. His prose was either critical essays or tales, usually fantastic.

*And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.—Joseph Glanvill.*

I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years since have elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot now bring these points to mind, because in truth the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular,

## THE SHORT STORY

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yet placid, cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine. Of her family I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone — by Ligeia — that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own — a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself — what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance* — if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged *Ashtophet* of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine.

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the

majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study, save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equaled her. It was the radiance of an opium-dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the fantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet her features were not of that regular mold which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. “There is no exquisite beauty,” says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and genera of beauty, “without some strangeness in the proportion.” Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity—although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed “exquisite,” and felt that there was much of “strangeness” pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of “the strange.” I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead: it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivaling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, “hyacinthine!” I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose—and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of

## THE SHORT STORY

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surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly — the magnificent turn of the short upper lip — the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under — the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke — the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin: and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fulness and spirituality, of the Greek — the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nour-jahad. Yet it was only at intervals — in moments of intense excitement — that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty — in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps — the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth, the beauty of the fabulous Houri of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The “strangeness,” however, which I found



## LIGEIA

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in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the expression. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it — that something more profound than the well of Democritus — which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What was it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers.

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact — never, I believe, noticed in the schools — that in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves upon the very verge of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression — felt it approaching, yet not quite be mine, and so at length entirely depart! And (strange, oh, strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression. I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always around, within me, by her large and luminous orbs. Yet not the more could

## THE SHORT STORY

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I define that sentiment, or analyze, or even steadily view it. I recognized it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly-growing vine — in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean; in the falling of a meteor. I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people. And there are one or two stars in the heavens (one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in Lyra), in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling. I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books. Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvill, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness — who shall say?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment: “ And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”

Length of years and subsequent reflection have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia. An intensity in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the

## LIGEIA

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tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me — by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice — and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with her manner of utterance) of the wild words which she habitually uttered.

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia: it was immense — such as I have never known in woman. In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient; and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault. Indeed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse, of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I ever found Ligeia at fault? How singularly, how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman — but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, all the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during the earlier years of our marriage. With how vast a triumph, with how vivid a delight, with how much of all that is ethereal in hope, did I feel, as she bent over me in studies but little sought — but less known, that

## THE SHORT STORY

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delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted. Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed. Wanting the radiant luster of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead. And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia grew ill. The wild eyes blazed with a too-too glorious effulgence; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave; and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion. I saw that she must die — and I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael. And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own. There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors; but not so. Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow. I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle. I would have soothed — I would have reasoned; but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life — for life — but for life — solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writh-



## LIGEIA

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ings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanor. Her voice grew more gentle — grew more low — yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened, entranced, to a melody more than mortal — to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known.

That she loved me I should not have doubted; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion. But in death only was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection. For long hours, detaining my hand, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry. How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions? how had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate. Let me say only, that in Ligeia's more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognized the principle of her longing, with so wildly earnest a desire, for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing, it is this eager vehemence of desire for life — but for life, that I have no power to portray, no utterance capable of expressing.

At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning me peremptorily to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before. I obeyed her. They were these:

Lo! 't is a gala night

Within the lonesome latter years.

An angel throng, bewinged, bedight

In veils, and drowned in tears,



## THE SHORT STORY

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Sit in a theater to see  
A play of hopes and fears,  
While the orchestra breathes fitfully  
The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,  
Mutter and mumble low,  
And hither and thither fly;  
Mere puppets they, who come and go  
At bidding of vast formless things  
That shift the scenery to and fro,  
Flapping from out their condor wings  
Invisible Woe.

That motley drama — oh, be sure  
It shall not be forgot!  
With its Phantom chased for evermore,  
By a crowd that seize it not,  
Through a circle that ever returneth in  
To the self-same spot;  
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,  
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout  
A crawling shape intrude:  
A blood-red thing that writhes from out  
The scenic solitude!  
It writhes — it writhes! with mortal pangs  
The mimes become its food,  
And seraphs sob at vermin fangs  
In human gore imbued.

Out — out are the lights — out all!  
And over each quivering form  
The curtain, a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm,  
While the angels, all pallid and wan,  
Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"  
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.

## LIGEIA

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“ O God ! ” half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines — “ O God ! O Divine Father ! — shall these things be undeviatingly so ? shall this conqueror be not once conquered ? Are we not part and parcel in Thee ? Who — who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor ? ‘ Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will. ’ ”

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear, and distinguished, again, the concluding words of the passage in Glanvill : “ Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will. ”

She died : and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow, could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more, than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honored memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet although the exter-

## THE SHORT STORY

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nal abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within. For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste, and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber ever accursed, whither, in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride — as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia — the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden and a daughter so beloved? I have said that I minutely remember the details of the chamber — yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment; and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole win-

dow — an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice — a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon, passing through it, fell with a ghastly luster on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting depended, by a single chain of gold with long links a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-colored fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about; and there was the couch, too — the bridal couch — of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief fantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height, even unproportionably so, were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry — tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the win-



## THE SHORT STORY

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dow. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies, giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these, in a bridal chamber such as this, I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhallowed hours of the first month of our marriage — passed them with but little disquietude. That my wife dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper — that she shunned me, and loved me but little — I could not help perceiving; but it gave me rather pleasure than otherwise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to a demon than to man. My memory flew back (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I reveled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love. Now, then, did my



spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug), I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or among the sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned — ah, could it be forever? — upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever which consumed her, rendered her nights uneasy; and in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the distemper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent — finally, well. Yet but a brief period elapsed, ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering; and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease, which had thus apparently taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds — of the slight sounds —

## THE SHORT STORY

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and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she then heard, but which I could not hear — of motions which she then saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not all believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor, overspreading her face, had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer, two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person; and I saw that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich luster thrown from the censer, a shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke

## LIGEIA

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of them to Rowena. Having found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a gobletful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, however, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle footfall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby-colored fluid. If this I saw—not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride. Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted shadow-like before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-colored fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where

## THE SHORT STORY

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I had seen the faint traces of the shadow. It was there, however, no longer; and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia — and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded her thus enshrouded. The night waned; and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I felt that it came from the bed of ebony — the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror — but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse — but there was not the slightest perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I had heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations —



that Rowena still lived. It was necessary that some immediate exertion be made; yet the turret was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants — there were none within call — I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes — and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavors to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place; the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shriveled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death; a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body; and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startlingly aroused, and again gave myself up to passionate waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed, when (could it be possible?) I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened — in extremity of horror. The sound came again — it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw — distinctly saw — a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterwards they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my vision grew dim, that my reason wandered; and it was only by a violent effort that I at length succeeded in nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon the cheek and throat; a perceptible



## THE SHORT STORY

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warmth pervaded the whole frame; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady lived; and with redoubled ardor I betook myself to the task of restoration. I chafed and bathed the temples and the hands, and used every exertion which experience, and no little medical reading, could suggest. But in vain. Suddenly, the color fled, the pulsation ceased, the lips resumed the expression of the dead, and, in an instant afterward, the whole body took upon itself the icy chilliness, the livid hue, the intense rigidity, the sunken outline, and all the loathsome peculiarities of that which has been, for many days, a tenant of the tomb.

And again I sunk into visions of Ligeia — and again (what marvel that I shudder while I write?), again there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed. But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night? Why shall I pause to relate how, time after time, until near the period of the gray dawn, this hideous drama of revivification was repeated; how each terrific relapse was only into a sterner and apparently more irredeemable death; how each agony wore the aspect of a struggle with some invisible foe; and how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse? Let me hurry to a conclusion.

The greater part of the fearful night had worn away, and she who had been dead once again stirred — and now more vigorously than hitherto, although arousing from a dissolution more appalling in its utter helplessness than any. I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions, of which extreme

awe was perhaps the least terrible, the least consuming. The corpse, I repeat, stirred, and now more vigorously than before. The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance — the limbs relaxed — and, save that the eyelids were yet pressed heavily together, and that the bandages and draperies of the grave still imparted their charnel character to the figure, I might have dreamed that Rowena had indeed shaken off, utterly, the fetters of Death. But if this idea was not, even then, altogether adopted, I could at least doubt no longer, when arising from the bed, tottering, with feeble steps, with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced bodily and palpably into the middle of the apartment.

I trembled not — I stirred not — for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed — had chilled me into stone. I stirred not — but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts — a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the living Rowena who confronted me? Could it indeed be Rowena at all — the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, why should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily about the mouth — but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks — there were the roses as in her noon of life — yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers? but has she then grown taller since her malady? What inexpressible madness

## THE SHORT STORY

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seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long disheveled hair; it was blacker than the wings of the midnight! And now slowly opened the eyes of the figure which stood before me. "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never — can I never be mistaken — these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes — of my lost love — of the Lady — of the LADY LIGEIA."

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For a very careful analysis of this story and its use as an illustration of the structure of the modern Short Story, read Chapter XI, pp. 188-196, of Clayton Hamilton's *The Materials and Methods of Fiction*.

Look for the theme in this (which Poe repeats so insistently that you cannot miss it) and then examine the setting, plot, characters, incidents, etc., to see how he has embodied the theme in the narrative.

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## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT \*

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) is one of the best known of American prose writers. Although occasionally before his time a writer like William Austin or James Hogg or Washington Irving met most of the technical requirements of the short story, it was Poe and Hawthorne who became conscious of the artistic elements of that form of fiction, and practiced the art systematically. Hawthorne was born at Salem, Massachusetts, and educated at Bowdoin College, graduating in 1825. From 1838 to 1841 he was employed in the Boston Custom House. In 1841 he joined the famous Brook Farm Association. From 1846 to 1849 he was again in the government civil service, being surveyor of the port of Salem. He served later, from 1853 to 1857, as consul to Liverpool, returning to the United States in 1861 after a residence in England and visits to Italy and other continental countries.

His chief works and the dates of publication are as follows: *Twice Told Tales* (1837 and 1842), *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Snow Image and Other Twice Told Tales* (1852), and *The Marble Faun* (1860). He died at Plymouth, New Hampshire.

That very singular man, old Doctor Heidegger, once invited four venerable friends to meet him in his study. There were three white-bearded gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, and a withered gentlewoman whose name was the Widow

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## THE SHORT STORY

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Wycherly. They were all melancholy old creatures, who had been unfortunate in life, and whose greatest misfortune it was that they were not long ago in their graves. Mr. Medbourne, in the vigor of his age, had been a prosperous merchant, but had lost his all by a frantic speculation, and was little better than a mendicant. Colonel Killigrew had wasted his best years, and his health and substance in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, which had given birth to a brood of pains, such as the gout and divers other torments of soul and body. Mr. Gascoigne was a ruined politician, a man of evil fame, or at least had been so, till time had buried him from the knowledge of the present generation, and made him obscure instead of infamous. As for the Widow Wycherly, tradition tells us that she was a great beauty in her day; but, for a long while past, she had lived in deep seclusion, on account of certain scandalous stories which had prejudiced the gentry of the town against her. It is a circumstance worth mentioning that each of these three old gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, were early lovers of the Widow Wycherly, and had once been on the point of cutting each other's throats for her sake. And, before proceeding further, I will merely hint that Doctor Heidegger and all his four guests were sometimes thought to be a little beside themselves; as is not unfrequently the case with old people, when worried either by present troubles or woful recollections.

"My dear friends," said Doctor Heidegger, motioning them to be seated, "I am desirous of your assistance in one of those little experiments with which I amuse myself here in my study."



## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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If all stories were true, Doctor Heidegger's study must have been a very curious place. It was a dim, old-fashioned chamber, festooned with cobwebs and besprinkled with antique dust. Around the walls stood several oaken bookcases, the lower shelves of which were filled with rows of gigantic folios and black-letter quartos, and the upper with little parchment-covered duodecimos. Over the central bookcase was a bronze bust of Hippocrates, with which, according to some authorities, Doctor Heidegger was accustomed to hold consultations in all difficult cases of his practice. In the obscurest corner of the room stood a tall and narrow oaken closet, with its door ajar, within which doubtfully appeared a skeleton. Between two of the bookcases hung a looking-glass, presenting its high and dusty plate within a tarnished gilt frame. Among many wonderful stories related of this mirror, it was fabled that the spirits of all the doctor's deceased patients dwelt within its verge, and would stare him in the face whenever he looked thitherward. The opposite side of the chamber was ornamented with the full-length portrait of a young lady, arrayed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a visage as faded as her dress. Above half a century ago Doctor Heidegger had been on the point of marriage with this young lady; but, being affected with some slight disorder, she had swallowed one of her lover's prescriptions, and died on the bridal evening. The greatest curiosity of the study remains to be mentioned; it was a ponderous folio volume, bound in black leather, with massive silver clasps. There were no letters on the back, and nobody could tell the title of the book. But it was well known to be a book of magic;

## THE SHORT STORY

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and once, when a chambermaid had lifted it, merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet, the picture of the young lady had stepped one foot upon the floor, and several ghastly faces had peeped forth from the mirror, while the brazen head of Hippocrates had frowned, and said, "Forbear!"

Such was Doctor Heidegger's study. On the summer afternoon of our tale a small round table, as black as ebony, stood in the center of the room, sustaining a cut-glass vase of beautiful form and workmanship. The sunshine came through the window, between the heavy festoons of two faded damask curtains, and fell directly across this vase; so that a mild splendor was reflected from it on the ashen visages of the five old people who sat around. Four champagne glasses were also on the table.

"My dear old friends," repeated Doctor Heidegger, "may I reckon on your aid in performing an exceedingly curious experiment?"

Now Doctor Heidegger was a very strange old gentleman, whose eccentricity had become the nucleus for a thousand fantastic stories. Some of these fables, to my shame be it spoken, might possibly be traced back to mine own veracious self; and if any passages of the present tale should startle the reader's faith, I must be content to bear the stigma of a fiction-monger.

When the doctor's guests heard him talk of his proposed experiment, they anticipated nothing more wonderful than the murder of a mouse in an air-pump or the examination of a cobweb by the microscope, or some similar nonsense, with which he was constantly in the habit of pestering his intimates. But without waiting

## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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for a reply, Doctor Heidegger hobbled across the chamber, and returned with the same ponderous folio, bound in black leather, which common report affirmed to be a book of magic. Undoing the silver clasps, he opened the volume, and took from among its black-letter pages a rose, or what was once a rose, though now the green leaves and crimson petals had assumed one brownish hue, and the ancient flower seemed ready to crumble to dust in the doctor's hands.

"This rose," said Doctor Heidegger, with a sigh, "this same withered and crumbling flower, blossomed five and fifty years ago. It was given me by Sylvia Ward, whose portrait hangs yonder, and I meant to wear it in my bosom at our wedding. Five and fifty years it has been treasured between the leaves of this old volume. Now, would you deem it possible that this rose of half a century could ever bloom again?"

"Nonsense!" said the Widow Wycherly, with a peevish toss of her head. "You might as well ask whether an old woman's wrinkled face could ever bloom again."

"See!" answered Doctor Heidegger.

He uncovered the vase, and threw the faded rose into the water which it contained. At first, it lay lightly on the surface of the fluid, appearing to imbibe none of its moisture. Soon, however, a singular change began to be visible. The crushed and dried petals stirred, and assumed a deepening tinge of crimson, as if the flower were reviving from a deathlike slumber; the slender stalk and twigs of foliage became green; and there was the rose of half a century, looking as fresh as when Sylvia Ward had first given it to her lover. It was scarcely

## THE SHORT STORY

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full blown; for some of its delicate red leaves curled modestly around its moist bosom, within which two or three dewdrops were sparkling.

"That is certainly a very pretty deception," said the doctor's friends; carelessly, however, for they had witnessed greater miracles at a conjurer's show; "pray, how was it effected?"

"Did you never hear of the Fountain of Youth?" asked Doctor Heidegger, "which Ponce de Leon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of, two or three centuries ago?"

"But did Ponce de Leon ever find it?" said the Widow Wycherly.

"No," answered Doctor Heidegger, "for he never sought it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth, if I am rightly informed, is situated in the southern part of the Floridian peninsula, not far from Lake Macaco. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centuries old, have been kept as fresh as violets, by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me what you see in the vase."

"Ahem!" said Colonel Killigrew, who believed not a word of the doctor's story; "and what may be the effect of this fluid on the human frame?"

"You shall judge for yourself, my dear Colonel," replied Doctor Heidegger; "and all of you, my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to you the bloom of youth. For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your per-



## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

---

mission, therefore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment."

While he spoke, Doctor Heidegger had been filling the four champagne glasses with the water of the Fountain of Youth. It was apparently impregnated with an effervescent gas, for little bubbles were continually ascending from the depths of the glasses, and bursting in silvery spray at the surface. As the liquor diffused a pleasant perfume, the old people doubted not that it possessed cordial and comfortable properties; and though utter sceptics as to its rejuvenescent power, they were inclined to swallow it at once. But Doctor Heidegger besought them to stay a moment.

"Before you drink, my respectable old friends," said he, "it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be if, with your peculiar advantages, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age!"

The doctor's four venerable friends made him no answer, except by a feeble and tremulous laugh; so very ridiculous was the idea that, knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error, they should ever go astray again.

"Drink, then," said the doctor, bowing: "I rejoice that I have so well selected the subjects of my experiment."

With palsied hands they raised the glasses to their lips. The liquor, if it really possessed such virtues as Doctor Heidegger imputed to it, could not have been



## THE SHORT STORY

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bestowed on four human beings who needed it more wofully. They looked as if they had never known what youth or pleasure was, but had been the offspring of nature's dotage, and always the gray, decrepit, sapless, miserable creatures, who now sat stooping round the doctor's table, without life enough in their souls or bodies to be animated even by the prospect of growing young again. They drank off the water, and replaced their glasses on the table.

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sunshine, brightening over all their visages at once. There was a healthful suffusion on their cheeks, instead of the ashen hue that had made them look so corpselike. They gazed at one another, and fancied that some magic power had really begun to smooth away the deep and sad inscriptions which Father Time had been so long engraving on their brow. The Widow Wycherly adjusted her cap, for she felt almost like a woman again.

"Give us more of this wondrous water!" cried they, eagerly. "We are younger — but we are still too old! Quick — give us more!"

"Patience! patience!" quoth Doctor Heidegger, who sat watching the experiment with philosophic coolness. "You have been a long time growing old. Surely you might be content to grow young in half an hour! But the water is at your service."

Again he filled their glasses with the liquor of youth, enough of which still remained in the vase to turn half the old people in the city to the age of their own grand-

## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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children. While the bubbles were yet sparkling on the brim, the doctor's four guests snatched their glasses from the table, and swallowed the contents at a single gulp. Was it delusion? Even while the draught was passing down their throats, it seemed to have wrought a change on their whole systems. Their eyes grew clear and bright; a dark shade deepened among their silvery locks; they sat round the table, three gentlemen of middle age, and a woman hardly beyond her buxom prime.

"My dear widow, you are charming!" cried Colonel Killigrew, whose eyes had been fixed upon her face, while the shadows of age were flitting from it like darkness from the crimson daybreak.

The fair widow knew of old that Colonel Killigrew's compliments were not always measured by sober truth; so she started up and ran to the mirror, still dreading that the ugly visage of an old woman would meet her gaze. Meanwhile the three gentlemen behaved in such a manner as proved that the water of the Fountain of Youth possessed some intoxicating qualities, unless, indeed, their exhilaration of spirits were merely a light-some dizziness, caused by the sudden removal of the weight of years. Mr. Gascoigne's mind seemed to run on political topics, but whether relating to the past, present, or future could not easily be determined, since the same ideas and phrases have been in vogue these fifty years. Now he rattled forth full-throated sentences about patriotism, national glory, and the people's rights; now he muttered some perilous stuff or other, in a sly and doubtful whisper, so cautiously that even his own conscience could scarcely catch the secret; and now, again,

## THE SHORT STORY

---

he spoke in measured accents and a deeply deferential tone, as if a royal ear were listening to his well-turned periods. Colonel Killigrew all this time had been trolling forth a jolly bottle song, and ringing his glass in symphony with the chorus, while his eyes wandered toward the buxom figure of the Widow Wycherly. On the other side of the table Mr. Medbourne was involved in a calculation of dollars and cents, with which was strangely intermingled a project for supplying the East Indies with ice, by harnessing a team of whales to the polar icebergs.

As for the Widow Wycherly, she stood before the mirror, courtesying and simpering to her own image, and greeting it as the friend whom she loved better than all the world beside. She thrust her face close to the glass to see whether some long-remembered wrinkle or crow's-foot had indeed vanished. She examined whether the snow had so entirely melted from her hair that the venerable cap could be safely thrown aside. At last, turning briskly away, she came with a sort of dancing step to the table.

"My dear old doctor," cried she, "pray favor me with another glass!"

"Certainly, my dear madam, certainly!" replied the complaisant doctor. "See! I have already filled the glasses."

There, in fact, stood the four glasses, brimful of this wonderful water, the delicate spray of which, as it effervesced from the surface, resembled the tremulous glitter of diamonds. It was now so nearly sunset that the chamber had grown duskier than ever; but a mild and moonlike splendor gleamed from within the vase,

## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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and rested alike on the four guests, and on the doctor's venerable figure. He sat in a high-backed, elaborately carved oaken chair, with a gray dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time, whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company. Even while quaffing the third draught of the Fountain of Youth, they were almost awed by the expression of his mysterious visage.

But the next moment the exhilarating gush of young life shot through their veins. They were now in the happy prime of youth. Age, with its miserable train of cares, and sorrows, and diseases, was remembered only as the trouble of a dream, from which they had joyously awoke. The fresh gloss of the soul, so early lost, and without which the world's successive scenes had been but a gallery of faded pictures, again threw its enchantment over all their prospects. They felt like new-created beings in a new-created universe.

"We are young! We are young!" they cried, exultingly.

Youth, like the extremity of age, had effaced the strongly marked characteristics of middle life, and mutually assimilated them all. They were a group of merry youngsters, almost maddened with the exuberant frolicsomeness of their years. The most singular effect of their gayety was an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been the victims. They laughed loudly at their old-fashioned attire—the wide-skirted coats and flapped waistcoats of the young men, and the ancient cap and gown of the blooming girl. One limped across the floor like a gouty grandfather; one set a pair of spectacles astride of his



## THE SHORT STORY

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nose, and pretended to pore over the black-letter pages of the book of magic; a third seated himself in an arm-chair, and strove to imitate the venerable dignity of Doctor Heidegger. Then all shouted mirthfully, and leaped about the room. The Widow Wycherly — if so fresh a damsel could be called a widow — tripped up to the doctor's chair with a mischievous merriment in her rosy face.

“ Doctor, you dear old soul,” cried she, “ get up and dance with me!” And then the four young people laughed louder than ever, to think what a queer figure the poor old doctor would cut.

“ Pray excuse me,” answered the doctor, quietly. “ I am old and rheumatic, and my dancing days were over long ago. But either of these gay young gentlemen will be glad of so pretty a partner.”

“ Dance with me, Clara!” cried Colonel Killigrew.

“ No, no, I will be her partner!” shouted Mr. Gascoigne.

“ She promised me her hand fifty years ago!” exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.

They all gathered round her. One caught both her hands in his passionate grasp — another threw his arm about her waist — the third buried his hand among the curls that clustered beneath the widow's cap. Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turns, she strove to disengage herself, yet still remained in their triple embrace. Never was there a livelier picture of youthful rivalry, with bewitching beauty for the prize. Yet, by a strange deception, owing to the duskiness of the chamber and the antique dresses which they still wore, the tall mirror is



## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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said to have reflected the figures of the three old, gray, withered grandsires, ridiculously contending for the skinny ugliness of a shrivelled grandam.

But they were young: their burning passions proved them so. Inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, who neither granted nor quite withheld her favors, the three rivals began to interchange threatening glances. Still keeping hold of the fair prize, they grappled fiercely at one another's throats. As they struggled to and fro, the table was overturned, and the vase dashed into a thousand fragments. The precious Water of Youth flowed in a bright stream across the floor, moistening the wings of a butterfly, which, grown old in the decline of summer, had alighted there to die. The insect fluttered lightly through the chamber, and settled on the snowy head of Doctor Heidegger.

"Come, come, gentlemen!—come, Madame Wycherly!" exclaimed the doctor, "I really must protest against this riot."

They stood still and shivered; for it seemed as if gray Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years. They looked at old Doctor Heidegger, who sat in his carved arm-chair, holding the rose of half a century which he had rescued from among the fragments of the shattered vase. At the motion of his hand the rioters resumed their seats, the more readily because their violent exertions had wearied them, youthful though they were.

"My poor Sylvia's rose!" ejaculated Doctor Heidegger, holding it in the light of the sunset clouds; "it appears to be fading again."

## THE SHORT STORY

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And so it was. Even while the party were looking at it the flower continued to shrivel up, till it became as dry and fragile as when the doctor had first thrown it into the vase. He shook off the few drops of moisture which clung to its petals.

“ I love it as well thus as in its dewy freshness,” observed he, pressing the withered rose to his withered lips. While he spoke, the butterfly fluttered down from the doctor’s snowy head, and fell upon the floor.

His guests shivered again. A strange chillness, whether of the body or spirit they could not tell, was creeping gradually over them all. They gazed at one another, and fancied that each fleeting moment snatched away a charm, and left a deepening furrow where none had been before. Was it an illusion? Had the changes of a lifetime been crowded into so brief a space, and were they now four aged people, sitting with their old friend, Doctor Heidegger?

“ Are we grown old again so soon? ” cried they, dolefully.

In truth, they had. The Water of Youth possessed merely a virtue more transient than that of wine. The delirium which it created had effervesced away. Yes, they were old again! With a shuddering impulse, that showed her a woman still, the widow clasped her skinny hands over her face, and wished that the coffin lid were over it, since it could be no longer beautiful.

“ Yes, friends, ye are old again,” said Doctor Heidegger; “ and lo! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well, I bemoan it not; for if the fountain gushed at my very doorstep, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it — no, though its delirium were for years

## DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

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instead of moments. Such is the lesson ye have taught me! ”

But the doctor's four friends had taught no such lesson to themselves. They resolved forthwith to make a pilgrimage to Florida, and quaff at morning, noon, and night, from the Fountain of Youth.

### STUDY NOTES

The theme of this story might be stated thus: Hawthorne wrote *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* to show that life's failures are caused by some inherent imperfection in the nature of the individual, and that the same mistakes would probably be made again if one had the opportunity to live life over.

Is it really true that the larger mistakes in life are not due to a lack of foresight, of knowledge of things to come, but to some fundamental defect in character? And would we, if we had a chance to live our lives over again, learning nothing from first experiences, fall into the same follies as before? Try in a single phrase to sum up for each of the four people the fundamental weakness of character that apparently caused the failure in his or her career.

Taking this story as a typical example of the technic of the short story of seventy-five years ago, compare it in detail with a story of twenty-five or thirty years ago, such as Stevenson's *Will o' the Mill*.

## THE NECKLACE \*

By Guy De Maupassant

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man, and so she let herself be married to a petty clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the worn-out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her regrets which were despairing and dis-

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## THE NECKLACE

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tracted dreams. She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in the big arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the furnace. She thought of the long salons fitted up with ancient silk, of the delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy, and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner before the round table covered with a tablecloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup-tureen and declared with an enchanted air, "Ah, the delicious stew! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich and whom she did not like to go and see any more, because she suffered so much when she came back.

But, one evening, her husband returned home with a triumphant air, and holding a large envelope in his hand.



## THE SHORT STORY

---

“ There,” said he, “ there is something for you.”

She tore the paper sharply, and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

“ What do you want me to do with that? ”

“ But, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had awful trouble to get it. Every one wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there.”

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and she said, impatiently:

“ And what do you want me to put on my back? ”

He had not thought of that; he stammered

“ Why, the dress you go to the theater in. It looks very well to me.”

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was crying. Two great tears descended slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stut-tered:

“ What's the matter? What's the matter? ”

But by a violent effort she had conquered her grief, and she replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

“ Nothing. Only I have no dress, and therefore I

## THE NECKLACE

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can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable dress which you could use on other occasions, something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied, hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He had grown a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks down there, of a Sunday.

But he said:

"All right. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress."

The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you've been so queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all."

He resumed:

## THE SHORT STORY

---

“ You might wear natural flowers. It’s very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses.”

She was not convinced.

“ No; there’s nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich.”

But her husband cried :

“ How stupid you are ! Go look up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You’re quite thick enough with her to do that.”

She uttered a cry of joy.

“ It’s true. I never thought of it.”

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress.

Mme. Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel-box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel :

“ Choose, my dear.”

She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking :

“ Haven’t you any more ?”

“ Why, yes. Look. I don’t know what you like.”

All of a sudden she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb necklace of diamonds; and her heart began to beat with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and remained lost in ecstasy at the sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anguish :

## THE NECKLACE

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“ Can you lend me that, only that? ”

“ Why, yes, certainly. ”

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wanted to waltz with her. She was remarked by the Minister himself.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to a woman's heart.

She went away about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a very good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps which he had brought, modest wraps of common life, whose poverty contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this, and wanted to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back.

“ Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will go and call a cab. ”

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they were in the street, they did not

## THE SHORT STORY

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find a carriage; and they began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw passing by at a distance.

They went down towards the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulant coupes which, exactly as if they were ashamed to show their misery during the day, are never seen 'round Paris until after nightfall.

It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, sadly, they climbed up homeward. All was ended for her. And as to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps, which covered her shoulders, before the glass, so as once more to see herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck!

Her husband, already half undressed, demanded:

"What is the matter with you?"

She turned madly towards him.

"I have — I have — I've lost Mme. Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distracted.

"What! How? Impossible!"

And they looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked:

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?"

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. Probably. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you, didn't you notice it?"



## THE NECKLACE

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“ No.”

They looked, thunderstruck, at one another. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

“ I shall go back on foot,” said he, “ over the whole route which we have taken, to see if I can’t find it.”

And he went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o’clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward ; he went to the cab companies — everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

“ You must write to your friend,” said he, “ that you have broken the clasp of her necklace, and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn around.”

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared :

“ We must consider how to replace that ornament.”

The next day they took the box which had contained it, and they went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

“ It was not I, Madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case.”

## THE SHORT STORY

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Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, sick, both of them, with chagrin and with anguish.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they looked for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred francs of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers, and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he could meet it; and, frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace, Mme. Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner. I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Mme. Loisel for a thief?

## THE NECKLACE

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Mme. Loisel now knew the horrible existence of the needy. She took her part, moreover, all on a sudden, with heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails on the greasy pots and pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts, and the dish cloths, which she dried upon a rope; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her miserable money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked in the evening making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, — everything, with the rates of usury, and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households — strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window,

## THE SHORT STORY

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and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How life is strange and changeable! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved!

But one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Was she going to speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

“ Good-day, Jeanne.”

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain goodwife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

“ But — Madame! — I do not know — You must have mistaken.”

“ No. I am Mathilde Loisel.”

Her friend uttered a cry.

“ Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed! ”

“ Yes, I have had days hard enough since I have seen you, days wretched enough — and that because of you! ”

“ Of me! How so? ”

“ Do you remember that diamond necklace which you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball? ”

“ Yes. Well? ”

“ Well, I lost it.”

## THE NECKLACE

---

“What do you mean? You brought it back.”

“I brought you back another just like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad.”

Mme. Forestier had stopped.

“You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?”

“Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.”

And she smiled with a joy which was proud and naïve at once.

Mme. Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands.

“Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!”

### STUDY NOTES

It has been said that Maupassant wrote this story to show how apparent calamity is often really a blessing in disguise. Those who say this think that Mathilde was a failure until she was forced to do hard work to help repay the debt contracted as a result of her foolishness. Do you think this was the author's view of her character?

Find in the story reason to accept or reject the following line as the theme: “What a little thing it takes to make you or to lose you!”



## THREE ARSHINS OF LAND \*

By Lyof N. Tolstoi

Count Lyof Nikolaievich Tolstoi (1828-1911) was one of the greatest men of the nineteenth century. He is well known the world over as social reformer, religious mystic, and novelist. He was born in the province of Tula, Russia, educated at the University of Kazan and served as a young soldier in the Caucasus and in the Crimean Wars. After the liberation of the Russian serfs he retired to his estates in Southern Russia and there lived among the peasants as a friend and helper. In his old age he wrote little stories dealing with peasant problems and had them printed and distributed without copyright and at a very small cost. The story *Three Arshins of Land* or *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* is one of these stories. *Where Love Is, There God Is Also* is another.

Among his best known novels may be mentioned *War and Peace* (1865-68), a novel of Russian life from 1805 to 1815; *Anna Karenina* (1875-78), *Ivan Ilyitch* (1886); *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1890); and *Resurrection* (1900).

Pakhom's neighbor was a lady who owned a little estate. She had one hundred and twenty dessyatins.† For a long time she had never harmed the peasants in any way, living in peace with them. But lately she had installed a retired soldier as superintendent, and he worried the peasants with fines. No matter how careful

\* Reprinted from *Current Opinion*, with the consent of the editor and of the translator, Archibald J. Wolfe.

† Properly, 2.7 acres.

### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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Pakhom was, a horse would invade his neighbor's oat-field, or his cow would stray into her garden or the calves into the pasture. There was a fine for everything.

Pakhom paid, growled, beat his family, and in the course of the summer laid up much sin upon his soul because of the superintendent. He found relief only by keeping his cattle in the yard. He begrudged the fodder, but he was thus spared much anxiety.

In the winter the rumor spread that his neighbor meant to dispose of her land and that the superintendent thought of buying it. When the peasants heard this they were greatly troubled.

If the superintendent becomes the master, they judged, there will be no end to the fines.

They importuned the lady to sell the land to the community and not to the superintendent. As they promised to pay her more than the latter, she agreed. The peasants held a meeting, then met again, but came to no understanding. The Devil sowed dissensions. Finally they decided that each should buy land according to his means, and the owner consented again.

When Pakhom heard that a neighboring peasant had bought twenty dessyatins of the land, with time extension to pay one-half of the purchase price, he became envious. "They'll sell the whole land, and I'll go empty-handed." He consulted with his wife. "The peasants are buying land. We must get ten dessyatins," he said. They considered how to arrange the matter.

They had saved a hundred rubles. They sold a foal, one-half of their beehives, hired the son out as a laborer, and thus succeeded in scraping one-half of the money together.

## THE SHORT STORY

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Pakhom looked over a tract of land of fifteen dessyatins, with a grove, and negotiated with his neighbor. He contracted for the fifteen dessyatins and paid his earnest money. Then they drove to the city and made out the deed. He paid one-half of the money and agreed to pay the rest in two years. Pakhom now had land.

He borrowed money from his brother-in-law, bought seed and sowed the purchased land. Everything came up beautifully. Inside of a year he was able to pay off his debts to the neighbor and to his brother-in-law. Pakhom was now a landowner in his own right. He cultivated his own ground, and cut his own pasturage. He was overjoyed. The grass had another look; different kinds of flowers seemed to bloom on it. Once upon a time this land had looked to him the same as any other, but now it was a specially blessed piece of God's earth.

Pakhom was enjoying life. Everything would be well now if the peasants only left his fields alone, if they did not let their cattle graze on his meadows. He admonished them in a friendly fashion. But they did not desist from driving their cows on his land, and at night the strangers' horses invaded his grain. Pakhom chased them and for a time did not lay it up against the peasants. Finally, however, he lost patience and made a complaint to the court. He knew very well, tho, that necessity forced the peasants to do this, not love of wrongdoing. Still, he thought, he would have to teach them a lesson, or they would graze his land bare. A good lesson might be useful.

With the help of the court he taught them more than one lesson; more than one peasant was fined. And so

### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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it happened that the peasants were in no amiable mood towards him and were eager to play tricks on him. He was soon at loggerheads with all his neighbors. His land had grown, but the confines of the community seemed all too narrow now.

One day, as he was seated at home, a traveling peasant asked for a lodging. Pakhom kept him over night, gave him plenty of meat and drink, inquired where he came from and talked of this and that. The peasant related that he was on the way from the lower Volga region, where he had been working. Many peasants had settled there. They were received into the community and ten dessyatins were allotted to each. Beautiful land! It made the heart feel glad to see it full of sheaves. A peasant had come there naked and poor, with empty hands, and now he had fifty dessyatins under wheat. Last year he sold his one crop of wheat for five thousand rubles.

Pakhom listened with delight. He thought: why plague oneself in this crowded section, if one can live fine elsewhere? I will sell my land and property and from the proceeds I will buy land on the lower Volga and start a farm. Here in this crowded corner there is nothing but quarreling. I will go and look things over for myself.

When summer came he started on his journey. He went by boat to Samara on the Volga, then four thousand versts on foot. When he arrived at his journey's end he found things even as they had been reported to him. Ten dessyatins were allotted to each person, and the mujiks were glad to receive the stranger into the community. If a man brought money with him he was



## THE SHORT STORY

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welcome and could buy as much land as he pleased. Three rubles a dessyatin was the price for the best land.

When Pakhom had investigated everything, he returned home, sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and cattle, took leave from his community, and, when the spring came around, he journeyed with his family to the new lands.

When he reached his destination with his family, Pakhom settled in a large village and registered in the community. Having treated the elders, he received his papers in good order. He had been taken into the community, and, in addition to the pasturage, land for five souls — fifty dessyatins in all — were allotted to him. He built a homestead and bought cattle. His allotment was twice as large as his former holdings. And what fertile land! He had enough of everything and could keep as many head of cattle as he wished.

In the beginning, while he was building and equipping his homestead, he was well satisfied. But after he had lived there a while he began to feel that the new lands were too narrow. The first year Pakhom sowed wheat on his allotted land. It came up bountifully, and this created a desire to have more land at his disposal. He drove over to the merchant and leased some land for a year. The seed yielded a plentiful harvest. Unfortunately the fields were quite far from the village and the gathered grain had to be carted for a distance of fifteen versts. He saw peasant traders in the neighborhood owning dairies and amassing wealth. How much better were it, thought Pakhom, to buy land instead of leasing it, and to start dairying. That would give me a well-rounded property, all in one hand.



### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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Then he came across a peasant who owned five hundred dessyatins of land, but found himself ruined and was eager to dispose of his property at a low figure. They closed a deal. Pakhom was to pay fifteen hundred rubles, one-half down, one-half later.

About this time a traveling merchant stopped at Pakhom's farm to feed his horses. They drank tea and spoke of this and that. The merchant told him that he was on his way home from the land of the Bashkirs. He had bought land there, about five thousand dessyatins, and had paid one thousand rubles for it. Pakhom made inquiries. The merchant willingly gave information.

"Only one thing is needful," he explained, "and that is to do some favor to their Chief. I distributed raiment and rugs among them, which cost me a hundred rubles, and I divided a chest of tea between them, and whoever wanted it had his fill of vodka. I got the dessyatin land for twenty copeks. Here is the deed. The land along the river and even on the steppes is wheat-growing land."

Pakhom made further inquiries.

"You couldn't walk the land through in a year," reported the merchant. "All this is Bashkir-land. The men are as simple as sheep; one could buy from them almost for nothing."

And Pakhom thought: "Why should I buy for my thousand rubles five hundred dessyatins of land and hang a debt around my neck, while for the same amount I can acquire immeasurable property."

Pakhom inquired the way to the land of the Bashkirs. As soon as he had seen the merchant off he made ready for the journey. He left the land and the homestead

## THE SHORT STORY

---

in his wife's charge and took only one of his farmhands along. In a neighboring city they bought a chest of tea, other presents, and some vodka, as the merchant had instructed them.

They rode and rode. They covered five hundred versts and on the seventh day they came into the land of the Bashkirs and found everything just as the merchant had described. On the riverside and in the steppes the Bashkirs live in kibitkas. They do not plow. They eat no bread. Cows and horses graze on the steppes. Foals are tied behind the tents, and mares are taken to them twice daily. They make kumyss out of mare's milk, and the women shake the kumyss to make cheese. The men drink kumyss and tea, eat mutton, and play the flute all day long. They are all fat and merry, and idle the whole summer through. Ignorant folk, they cannot speak Russian, but they were very friendly.

When they caught sight of Pakhom, the Bashkirs left their tents and surrounded him. An interpreter was at hand, whom Pakhom informed that he had come to buy land. The Bashkirs showed their joy and led Pakhom into their good tent. They bade him sit down on a fine rug, propped him up with downy cushions and treated him to tea and kumyss. They also slaughtered a sheep and offered him meat. Pakhom fetched from his tarantass the chest of tea and other presents and distributed them among the Bashkirs. The Bashkirs were overjoyed. They talked and talked among themselves and finally they ordered the interpreter to speak.

"They want me to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they have taken a liking to you. It is our custom to favor the guest in all possible ways and to return gifts

### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

---

for gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us what do you like of what we have so that we may give you presents also."

"Most of all I like land," replied Pakhom. "We're crowded where I am at home and everything is already under the plow. But you have good land and plenty of it. In all my born days I have never seen land like yours."

The Bashkirs were now talking again, and all at once it looked as tho they were quarreling. Pakhom asked why they were quarreling. The interpreter replied:

"Some of them think that the Chief should be consulted, and that no agreement ought to be made without him; but the others say it can be done without the Chief just as well."

While the Bashkirs were yet arguing, a man with a hat of fox fur entered the tent. Everybody stopped talking and they all rose.

"This is the Chief."

Pakhom immediately produced the best sleeping robe and five pounds of tea. The Chief accepted the presents and sat down in the place of honor. The Bashkirs spoke to him. He listened, smiled and addressed Pakhom in Russian.

"Well," he said, "that can be done. Help yourself, wherever it suits you. There is plenty of land."

"How can I do this, tho," thought Pakhom. "Some official confirmation is necessary. Otherwise they say today, help yourself, but afterwards they may take it away again." And he said:

"Thank you for these good words. You have plenty of land, and I need but little. Only I must know what

## THE SHORT STORY

---

land belongs to me. It must be measured and I need some sort of a confirmation. For God's will rules over life and death. You are good people and you give me the land; but it may happen that your children will take it away again."

The Chief laughed. "Surely this can be done," he agreed. "A confirmation so strong that it cannot be made stronger."

Pakhom replied: "I heard that a merchant had been here among you. You sold him land and gave him a deed. I should like to have it the same way."

The Chief immediately understood. "This too can be done," he exclaimed. "We have a writer. We will drive to the city and have the seals put on."

"We have but one price: one thousand rubles a day."

Pakhom failed to comprehend what sort of measure a day would be. "How many dessyatins will that make?"

"That we cannot figure out. For one day we sell you as much land as you can walk around in one day. The price of one day is one thousand rubles."

Pakhom looked surprised. "One can walk around a lot of land in one day," he said.

The Chief smiled. "Everything will be yours, but on one condition. If in the course of the day you do not return to the place you start from, your money is lost."

"But how can it be noted how far I have gone?"

"We will stay right at the starting point. Our lads will ride behind you. Where you command they will drive in a stake. Then we shall mark furrows from stake to stake. Choose your circle to suit yourself, only



### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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before sunset be back at the spot where you started from. All the land that you walk around shall be yours."

Pakhom assented. It was decided to start early in the morning. They conversed for a while, drank kumyss and tea and ate more mutton. When the night set in Pakhom retired to sleep and the Bashkirs dispersed. In the morning they were to meet again in order to journey to the starting point.

Pakhom could not fall asleep. He had his mind on the land. What manner of things he thought of introducing there! "A whole principality I have before me! I can easily make fifty versts in one day. The days are long now. Fifty versts encompass ten thousand desyatins. I will have to knuckle down to no one. I'll plow as much as may suit me; the rest I'll use for a pasturage."

The whole night through he was unable to close his eyes; only towards morning he dozed restlessly. Hardly had he begun to doze when he saw a vision. He was lying in his kibitka and heard laughter outside. To see who it was that laughed he stepped out of the kibitka and found the chief of the Bashkirs. He was holding his hands to his sides and fairly shaking with laughter. Pakhom approached him in his dream to find out why he was laughing, but now, instead of the Bashkir, he saw the merchant who had come to his farm and told him of this land. Just as he wanted to ask him how long he had been there, he saw that it was no longer the merchant but that mujik who had called on him at his old homestead and told him of the lower Volga region. And now again it was no longer the mujik but the Devil himself, with horns and hoofs, and he laughed and stared



## THE SHORT STORY

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at one spot. What is he looking upon? wondered Pakhom; why is he laughing? In his dream he saw a man lying outstretched, barefoot, clad only in a shirt and pair of trousers, with his face turned upward, white as a sheet. As he looked again to see what manner of man it was, he saw clearly that it was he himself.

He awoke with the horror of it. What dreadful things one sees in a dream! He looked about. It was commencing to dawn. The people must be roused. It was time to journey to the starting place.

Pakhom arose, waked his servant, who had been sleeping in the tarantass, harnessed the horses and went to wake the Bashkirs.

"It is time," he said, "to travel to the steppe."

The Bashkirs got up, assembled, and the chief came among them. Again they drank tea and wanted to treat Pakhom, but he urged them to be off.

"If we go, let it be done at once," he remarked. "It is high time."

The Bashkirs made ready, some of them on horseback, others in tarantasses. Pakhom, accompanied by his servant, drove in his own cart. They came to the steppe as the morning sun was beginning to crimson the sky, and driving over to a little hillock they gathered together. The chief came towards Pakhom and pointed with his hand to the steppes.

"All this land that you see," he said, "as far as your eye can reach, is ours. Choose to suit yourself."

Pakhom's eyes shone. In the distance he saw grass land, smooth as the palm of his hand, black as poppy seeds. In the deeper places the grass was growing shoulder high.

### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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The chief took his fur cap and placed it in the middle of the hill.

“ This is the landmark. Here place your gold. Your servant will stay here. Go from this point hence and come back again. All the land which you encompass walking is yours.”

Pakhom took out the money and laid it on the cap. He took off his coat, keeping the vest on, took a bag of bread, tied a flat water bottle to his belt, pulled up his top boots and made ready to go. He hesitated for a while which direction to take. The view was everywhere enchanting. Finally he said to himself: “ I’ll go towards the rising of the sun.” He faced the East and stretched himself waiting for the sun to appear above the horizon. There was no time to lose. It is better walking in the cool of the morning. The riders took up their positions behind him. As soon as the sun was visible, he set off, followed by the men on horseback.

He walked neither briskly nor slowly. He had walked about a verst without stopping when he ordered a stake to be driven in. Once again in motion, he hastened his steps and soon ordered another stake to be put in. He looked back; the hill was still to be seen with the people on it. Looking up at the sun he figured that he had walked about five versts. It had grown warm, so he doffed his vest. Five versts further the heat began to trouble him. Another glance at the sun showed him it was time for breakfast. “ I have already covered a good stretch,” he thought. “ Of course, there are four of these to be covered today, still it is too early to turn yet; but I’ll take my boots off.” He sat down, took off his boots and went on. The walking was now easier. “ I can go five

## THE SHORT STORY

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verts more," he thought, "and then turn to the left." The further he went, the more beautiful the land grew. He walked straight ahead. As he looked again, the hill was hardly to be seen and the people on it looked like ants.

"Now it's time to turn back," he thought. "How hot I am! I feel like having a drink." He took his bottle with water and drank while walking. Then he made them drive in another stake and turned to the left. He walked and walked; the grass was high, the sun beat down with evergrowing fierceness. Weariness now set in. A glance at the sun showed him that it was midday. "I must rest," he thought. He stopped and ate a little bread. "If I sit down to eat, I'll fall asleep." He stood for a while, caught his breath and walked on. For a time it was easy. The food had refreshed him and given him new strength. But it was too oppressively hot and sleep threatened to overcome him. He felt exhausted. "Well," he thought, "an hour of pain for an age of joy."

In this second direction he walked nearly ten verts. He meant then to turn to the left, but lo! the section was so fine—a luxuriant dale. Pity to give it up! What a wonderful place for flax! And again he walked straight on, appropriated the dale and marked the place with a stake. Now only he made his second turning. Casting his glance at the starting point he could hardly discern any people on the hill. "Must be about fifteen verts away. I have made the two sides too long and I must shorten the third. Though the property will turn out irregular in this way, what else can be done? I must turn in and walk straight toward the hill. I must hasten

### THREE ARSHINS OF LAND

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and guard against useless turns. I have plenty of land now." And he turned and walked straight toward the hill.

Pakhom's feet ached. He had worked them almost to a standstill. His knees were giving way. He felt like taking a rest, but he dared not. He had no time; he must be back before sunset. The sun does not wait. He ran on as though someone were driving him.

"Did I not make a mistake? Did I not try to grab too much? If I only get back in time! It is so far off, and I am all played out. If only all my trouble and labor be not in vain! I must exert myself to the utmost."

He shivered and ran onward in a trot. His feet were bleeding now. Still he ran. He cast off his vest, the boots, the bottle, the cap. "I was too greedy! I have ruined all! I can't get back by sunset!"

It was getting worse all the time. Fear shortened his breath. He ran on. The shirt and trousers were sticking to his body, his mouth was all dried out, his bosom was heaving like the bellows in a forge, his heart was beating like a hammer, the knees felt as though they were another's and gave under him.

He hardly thought of the land now; he merely thought what to do so as not to die from exertion. Yes, he feared to die, but he could not stop. "I have run so much that if I stop now they will call me a fool."

The Bashkirs, he could hear clearly, were screaming and calling. Their noise added fuel to his burning heart. With the last effort of his strength he ran. The sun was close to the horizon, but the hill was quite near now. The Bashkirs were beckoning, calling. He saw the fur cap, saw his money in it, saw the chief squatting on

## THE SHORT STORY

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the ground with his hands at his stomach. He remembered his dream. "Earth there is a-plenty," he thought, "but will God let me live thereon? Ah, I have destroyed myself." And still he kept on running.

He looked at the sun. It was large and crimson, touching the earth and beginning to sink. He reached the foot of the hill. The sun had gone down. A cry of woe escaped from his lips. He thought all was lost. But he remembered that the sun must yet be visible from a higher spot. He rushed up the hill. There was the cap. He stumbled and fell, but reached the cap with his hands.

"Good lad!" exclaimed the chief. "You have gained much land."

As Pakhom's servant rushed to his side and tried to lift him, blood was flowing from his mouth. He was dead.

The servant lamented.

The chief was still squatting on the ground, and now he began laughing loudly and holding his sides. Then he rose to his feet, threw a spade to the servant and said, "Here, dig!"

The Bashkirs all clambered to their feet and drove away. The servant remained alone with the corpse.

He dug a grave for Pakhom, the measure of his body from head to foot — three arshins \* and no more. There he buried Pakhom.

\* An arshin is about two feet.



## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO \*

By Lyof N. Tolstoi

In a certain city dwelt Martin Avdyeeich, the cobbler. He lived in a cellar, a wretched little hole with a single window. The window looked up towards the street, and through it Martin could just see the passers-by. It is true that he could see little more than their boots, but Martin Avdyeeich could read a man's character by his boots; so he needed no more. Martin Avdyeeich had lived long in that one place, and had many acquaintances. Few indeed were the boots in that neighborhood which had not passed through his hands at some time or other. On some he would fasten new soles, to others he would give side-pieces, others again he would stitch all round, and even give them new uppers if need be. And often he saw his own handiwork through the window. There was always lots of work for him, for Avdyeeich's hand was cunning and his leather good; nor did he overcharge, and always kept his word. He always engaged to do a job by a fixed time if he could; but if he could not, he said so at once, and deceived no man. So every one knew Avdyeeich, and he had no lack of work. Avdyeeich had always been a pretty good man, but as he grew old he began to think more about his soul, and draw nearer to his God. While Martin was still a journeyman his wife had died; but his wife

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## THE SHORT STORY

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had left him a little boy — three years old. Their other children had not lived. All the eldest had died early. Martin wished at first to send his little child into the country to his sister, but afterwards he thought better of it. “My Kapitoshka,” thought he, “will feel miserable in a strange household. He shall stay here with me.” And so Avdyeeich left his master, and took to living in lodgings alone with his little son. But God did not give Avdyeeich happiness in his children. No sooner had the little one begun to grow up and be a help and a joy to his father’s heart, than a sickness fell upon Kapitoshka; the little one took to his bed, lay there in a raging fever for a week, and then died. Martin buried his son in despair — so desperate was he that he began to murmur against God. Such disgust of life overcame him that he more than once begged God that he might die; and he reproached God for taking not him, an old man, but his darling, his only son, instead. And after that Avdyeeich left off going to church.

And, lo! one day there came to Avdyeeich from the Troitsa Monastery an aged peasant-pilgrim — it was already the eighth year of his pilgrimage. Avdyeeich fell a-talking with him, and began to complain of his great sorrow. “As for living any longer, thou man of God,” said he, “I desire it not. Would only that I might die! That is my sole prayer to God. I am now a man who has no hope.”

And the old man said to him: “Thy speech, Martin, is not good. How shall we judge the doings of God? God’s judgments are not our thoughts. God willed that thy son shouldst die, but that thou shouldst live. Therefore ’twas the best thing both for him and for thee. It

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

is because thou wouldst fain have lived for thy own delight that thou dost now despair."

"But what then is a man to live for?" asked Avdyeeich.

And the old man answered: "For God, Martin! He gave thee life, and for Him therefore must thou live. When thou dost begin to live for Him, thou wilt grieve about nothing more, and all things will come easy to thee."

Martin was silent for a moment, and then he said: "And how must one live for God?"

"Christ hath shown us the way. Thou knowest thy letters. Buy the Gospels and read; there thou wilt find out how to live for God. There everything is explained."

These words made the heart of Avdyeeich burn within him, and he went the same day and bought for himself a New Testament printed in very large type, and began to read.

Avdyeeich set out with the determination to read it only on holidays; but as he read, it did his heart so much good that he took to reading it every day. And the second time he read until all the kerosene in the lamp had burnt itself out, and for all that he could not tear himself away from the book. And so it was every evening. And the more he read, the more clearly he understood what God wanted of him, and how it behooved him to live for God; and his heart grew lighter and lighter continually. Formerly, whenever he lay down to sleep he would only sigh and groan, and think of nothing but Kapitoshka, but now he would only say to himself: "Glory to Thee! Glory to Thee, O Lord! Thy will be done!"

## THE SHORT STORY

---

Henceforth the whole life of Avdyeeich was changed. Formerly, whenever he had a holiday, he would go to the tavern to drink tea, nor would he say "no" to a drop of brandy now and again. He would tipple with his comrades, and though not actually drunk, would, for all that, leave the inn a bit merry, babbling nonsense and talking loudly and censoriously. He had done with all that now. His life became quiet and joyful. With the morning light he sat down to his work, worked out his time, then took down his lamp from the hook, placed it on the table, took down his book from the shelf, bent over it, and sat him down to read. And the more he read the more he understood, and his heart grew brighter and happier.

It happened once that Martin was up reading till very late. He was reading St. Luke's Gospel. He was reading the sixth chapter, and as he read he came to the words: "And to him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." This passage he read several times, and presently he came to that place where the Lord says: "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man which built an house, and dug deep, and laid the foundations on a rock. And when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the sand, against which the storm did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

Avdyeeich read these words through and through, and his heart was glad. He took off his glasses, laid them on the book, rested his elbow on the table, and fell a-thinking. And he began to measure his own life by these words. And he thought to himself, "Is my house built on the rock or on the sand? How good to be as on a rock! How easy it all seems to thee sitting alone here! It seems as if thou wert doing God's will to the full, and so thou takest no heed and fallest away again. And yet thou wouldst go on striving, for so it is good for thee. O Lord, help me!" Thus thought he, and would have laid him down, but it was a grief to tear himself away from the book. And so he began reading the seventh chapter. He read all about the Centurion, he read all about the Widow's Son, he read all about the answer to the disciples of St. John; and so he came to that place where the rich Pharisee invited our Lord to be his guest. And he read all about how the woman who was a sinner anointed His feet and washed them with her tears, and how He justified her. And so he came at last to the forty-fourth verse, and there he read these words, "And He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she has washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint." And again Avdyeeich took off his glasses, and laid them on the book, and fell a-thinking.

"So it is quite plain that I, too, have something of the Pharisee about me. Am I not always thinking of



## THE SHORT STORY

---

myself? Am I not always thinking of drinking tea, and keeping myself as warm and cosy as possible, without thinking at all about the guest? Simon thought about himself, but did not give the slightest thought to his guest. But who was his guest? The Lord Himself. And suppose He were to come to me, should I treat Him as the Pharisee did? "

And Avdyeeich leaned both his elbows on the table and, without perceiving it, fell a-dozing.

"Martin! "—it was as the voice of someone close to his ear.

Martin started up from his nap. "Who's there? "

He turned round, he gazed at the door, but there was no one. Again he dozed off. Suddenly he heard quite plainly,

"Martin, Martin, I say! Look tomorrow into the street. I am coming."

Martin awoke, rose from his chair, and began to rub his eyes. And he did not know himself whether he had heard these words asleep or awake. He turned down the lamp and laid him down to rest.

At dawn next day Avdyeeich arose, prayed to God, lit his stove, got ready his gruel and cabbage soup, filled his samovar, put on his apron, and sat him down by his window to work. There Avdyeeich sits and works, and thinks of nothing but the things of yesternight. His thoughts were divided. He thought at one time that he must have gone off dozing, and then again he thought he really must have heard that voice. It might have been so, thought he.

Martin sits at the window and looks as much at his window as at his work, and whenever a strange pair of

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

boots passes by, he bends forward and looks out of the window, so as to see the face as well as the feet of the passers-by. The house porter passed by in new felt boots, the water-carrier passed by, and after that there passed close to the window an old soldier, one of Nicholas's veterans, in tattered old boots, with a shovel in his hands. Avdyeeich knew him by his boots. The old fellow was called Stepanuich, and lived with the neighboring shopkeeper, who harbored him of his charity. His duty was to help the porter. Stepanuich stopped before Avdyeeich's window to sweep away the snow. Avdyeeich cast a glance at him, and then went on working as before.

"I'm not growing sager as I grow older," thought Avdyeeich, with some self-contempt. "I make up my mind that Christ is coming to me, and, lo! 'tis only Stepanuich clearing away the snow. Thou simpleton, thou! thou art wool-gathering!" Then Avdyeeich made ten more stitches, and then he stretched his head once more towards the window. He looked through the window again, and there he saw that Stepanuich had placed the shovel against the wall, and was warming himself and taking breath a bit.

"The old man is very much broken," thought Avdyeeich to himself. "It is quite plain that he has scarcely strength enough to scrape away the snow. Suppose I make him drink a little tea! the samovar, too, is just on the boil." Avdyeeich put down his awl, got up, placed the samovar on the table, put some tea in it, and tapped on the window with his fingers. Stepanuich turned round and came to the window. Avdyeeich beckoned to him, and then went and opened the door.

## THE SHORT STORY

---

"Come in and warm yourself a bit," cried he.  
"You're a bit chilled, eh?"

"Christ requite you! Yes, and all my bones ache, too," said Stepanuich. Stepanuich came in, shook off the snow, and began to wipe his feet so as not to soil the floor, but he tottered sadly.

"Don't trouble about wiping your feet. I'll rub it off myself. It's all in the day's work. Come in and sit down," said Avdyeeich. "Here, take a cup of tea."

And Avdyeeich filled two cups, and gave one to his guest, and he poured his own tea out into the saucer and began to blow it.

Stepanuich drank his cup, turned it upside down, put a gnawed crust on the top of it, and said, "Thank you." But it was quite plain that he wanted to be asked to have some more.

"Have a drop more. Do!" said Avdyeeich, and poured out fresh cups for his guest and himself, and as Avdyeeich drank his cup, he could not help glancing at the window from time to time.

"Dost thou expect anyone?" asked his guest.

"Do I expect anyone? Well, honestly, I hardly know. I am expecting, and I am not expecting, and there's a word which has burnt itself right into my heart. Whether it was a vision or no, I know not. Look now, my brother! I was reading yesterday about our little Father Christ, how He suffered, how He came on earth. Hast thou heard of Him, eh?"

"I have heard, I have heard," replied Stepanuich, "but we poor ignorant ones know not our letters."

"Anyhow, I was reading about this very thing — how

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

He came down upon earth. I was reading how He went to the Pharisee, and how the Pharisee did not receive Him at all. Thus I thought, and so, about yesternight, little brother mine, I read that very thing, and bethought me how the Honorable did not receive our little Father Christ honorably. But suppose, I thought, if He came to one like me — would I receive Him? Simon at any rate did not receive Him at all. Thus I thought, and so thinking, fell asleep. I fell asleep, I say, little brother mine, and I heard my name called. I started up. A voice was whispering at my very ear. ‘Look out tomorrow!’ it said, ‘I am coming.’ And so it befell twice. Now look! wouldst thou believe it? the idea stuck to me — I scold myself for my folly, and yet I look for Him, our little Father Christ! ”

Stepanuich shook his head and said nothing, but he drank his cup dry and put it aside. Then Avdyeeich took up the cup and filled it again.

“Drink some more. ’Twill do thee good. Now it seems to me that when our little Father went about on earth, He despised no one, but sought unto the simple folk most of all. He was always among the simple folk. Those disciples of His, too, he chose most of them from amongst our brother-laborers, sinners like unto us. He that exalteth himself, He says, shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted. Ye, says He, call me Lord, and I, says He, wash your feet. He who would be the first among you, He says, let him become the servant of all. And therefore it is that He says, Blessed are the lowly, the peacemakers, the humble, and the long-suffering.”

Stepanuich forgot his tea. He was an old man, soft-



## THE SHORT STORY

---

hearted, and tearful. He sat and listened, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come, drink a little more," said Avdyeeich. But Stepanuich crossed himself, expressed his thanks, pushed away his cup, and got up.

"I thank thee, Martin Avdyeeich," said he. "I have fared well at thy hands, and thou hast refreshed me both in body and soul."

"Thou wilt show me a kindness by coming again. I am very glad to have a guest," said Avdyeeich. Stepanuich departed, and Martin poured out the last drop of tea, drank it, washed up, and again sat down by the window to work—he had some back-stitching to do. He stitched and stitched, and now and then cast glances at the window—he was looking for Christ, and could think of nothing but Him and His works. And the divers sayings of Christ were in his head all the time.

Two soldiers passed by, one in regimental boots, the other in boots of his own making; after that, the owner of the next house passed by in nicely brushed goloshes. A baker with a basket also passed by. All these passed by in turn, and then there came alongside the window a woman in worsted stockings and rustic shoes, and as she was passing by she stopped short in front of the partition wall. Avdyeeich looked up at her from his window, and he saw that the woman was a stranger and poorly clad, and that she had a little child with her. She was leaning up against the wall with her back to the wind, and tried to wrap the child up, but she had nothing to wrap it up with. The woman wore summer clothes, and thin enough they were. And from out of his corner Avdyeeich heard the child crying and the



## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

woman trying to comfort it, but she could not. Then Avdyeeich got up, went out of the door and on to the steps, and cried, "My good woman! my good woman!"

The woman heard him and turned round.

"Why dost thou stand out in the cold there with the child? Come inside! In the warm room thou wilt be better able to tend him. This way!"

The woman was amazed. What she saw was an old fellow in an apron and with glasses on his nose, calling to her. She came towards him.

They went down the steps together — they went into the room. The old man led the woman to the bed. "There," said he, "sit down, gossip, nearer to the stove, and warm and feed thy little one. . . ."

He went to the table, got some bread and a dish, opened the oven door, put some cabbage soup into the dish, took out a pot of gruel, but it was not quite ready, so he put some cabbage soup only into the dish, and placed it on the table. Then he fetched bread, took down the cloth from the hook, and spread it on the table.

"Sit down and have something to eat, gossip," said he, "and I will sit down a little with the youngster. I have had children of my own, and know how to manage them."

The woman crossed herself, sat down at the table, and began to eat, and Avdyeeich sat down on the bed with the child. Avdyeeich smacked his lips at him again and again, but his lack of teeth made it a clumsy joke at best. And all the time the child never left off shrieking. Then Avdyeeich hit upon the idea of shaking his finger at him, so he snapped his fingers up and down, backwards and forwards, right in front of the child's mouth,

because his finger was black and sticky with cobbler's wax. And the child stared at the finger and was silent, and presently it began to laugh. And Avdyeeich was delighted. But the woman went on eating, and told him who she was and whence she came.

"I am a soldier's wife," she said: "my eight months' husband they drove right away from me, and nothing has been heard of him since. I took a cook's place till I became a mother. They could not keep me and the child. It is now three months since I have been drifting about without any fixed resting-place. I have eaten away my all. I wanted to be a wet-nurse, but people wouldn't have me: 'Thou art too thin,' they said. I have just been to the merchant's wife where our grandmother lives, and there they promised to take me in. I thought it was all right, but she told me to come again in a week. But she lives a long way off. I am chilled to death, and he is quite tired out. But, God be praised! our landlady has compassion on us, and gives us shelter for Christ's sake. But for that I don't know how we could live through it all."

Avdyeeich sighed, and said, "And have you no warm clothes?"

"Ah, kind friend! this is indeed warm-clothes time, but yesterday I pawned away my last shawl for two *grivenki*."

The woman went to the bed and took up the child, but Avdyeeich stood up, went to the wall cupboard, rummaged about a bit, and then brought back with him an old jacket.

"Look!" said he, "'Tis a shabby thing, 'tis true, but it will do to wrap up in."

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

The woman looked at the old jacket, then she gazed at the old man, and, taking the jacket, fell a-weeping. Avdyeeich also turned away, crept under the bed, drew out a trunk, and seemed to be very busy about it, whereupon he again sat down opposite the woman.

Then the woman said: "Christ requite thee, dear little father! It is plain that it was He who sent me by thy window. When I first came out it was warm, and now it has turned very cold. And He it was, little father, who made thee look out of the window and have compassion on wretched me."

Avdyeeich smiled slightly, and said: "Yes, He must have done it, for I looked not out of the window in vain, dear gossip!"

And Avdyeeich told his dream to the soldier's wife also, and how he had heard a voice promising that the Lord should come to him that day.

"All things are possible," said the woman. Then she rose up, put on the jacket, wrapped it round her little one, and then began to curtsy and thank Avdyeeich once more.

"Take this for Christ's sake," said Avdyeeich, giving her a two-*grivenka* piece, "and redeem your shawl." The woman crossed herself, Avdyeeich crossed himself, and then he led the woman to the door.

The woman went away. Avdyeeich ate up the remainder of the cabbage soup, washed up, and again sat down to work. He worked on and on, but he did not forget the window, and whenever the window was darkened he immediately looked up to see who was passing. Acquaintances passed, strangers passed, but there was no one in particular.

## THE SHORT STORY

---

But now Avdyeeich sees how, right in front of his window, an old woman, a huckster, has taken her stand. She carries a basket of apples. Not many now remained, she had evidently sold them nearly all. Across her shoulder she carried a sack full of shavings. She must have picked them up near some new building, and was taking them home with her. It was plain that the sack was straining her shoulder. She wanted to shift it on to the other shoulder, so she rested the sack on the pavement, placed the apple-basket on a small post, and set about shaking down the shavings in the sack. Now while she was shaking down the sack, an urchin in a ragged cap suddenly turned up, goodness knows from whence, grabbed at one of the apples in the basket, and would have made off with it, but the wary old woman turned quickly round and gripped the youth by the sleeve. The lad fought and tried to tear himself loose, but the old woman seized him with both hands, knocked his hat off, and tugged hard at his hair. The lad howled, and the old woman reviled him. Avdyeeich ran out into the street.

The old woman was tugging at the lad's hair and wanted to drag him off to the police, while the boy fought and kicked.

"I didn't take it," said he. "What are you whacking me for? Let me go!"

Avdyeeich came up and tried to part them. He seized the lad by the arm and said: "Let him go, little mother! Forgive him for Christ's sake!"

"I'll forgive him so that he sha'n't forget the taste of fresh birch-rods. I mean to take the rascal to the police station."

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

Avdyeeich began to entreat with the old woman.

“Let him go, little mother; he will not do so any more. Let him go for Christ’s sake.”

The old woman let him go. The lad would have bolted, but Avdyeeich held him fast.

“Beg the little mother’s pardon,” said he, “and don’t do such things any more. I saw thee take them.”

Then the lad began to cry and beg pardon.

“Well, that’s all right! And now, there’s an apple for thee.” And Avdyeeich took one out of the basket and gave it to the boy. “I’ll pay thee for it, little mother,” he said to the old woman.

“Thou wilt ruin them that way, the blackguards,” said the old woman. “If I had the rewarding of him, he should not be able to sit down for a week.”

“Oh, little mother, little mother!” cried Avdyeeich, “that is our way of looking at things, but it is not God’s way. If he ought to be whipped so for the sake of one apple, what do we deserve for our sins?”

The old woman was silent.

And Avdyeeich told the old woman about the parable of the master who forgave his servant a very great debt, and how that servant immediately went out and caught his fellow-servant by the throat because he was his debtor. The old woman listened to the end, and the lad listened, too.

“God bade us forgive,” said Avdyeeich, “otherwise He will not forgive us. We must forgive everyone, especially the thoughtless.”

The old woman shook her head and sighed.

“That’s all very well,” she said, “but they are spoiled enough already.”



## THE SHORT STORY

---

"Then it is for us old people to teach them better," said Avdyeeich.

"So say I," replied the old woman. "I had seven of them at one time, and now I have but a single daughter left." And the old woman began telling him where and how she lived with her daughter, and how many grandchildren she had. "I'm not what I was," she said, "but I work all I can. I am sorry for my grandchildren, and good children they are, too. No one is so glad to see me as they are. Little Aksyutka will go to none but me. 'Grandma dear! darling grandma!'" and the old woman was melted to tears. "As for him," she added, pointing to the lad, "boys will be boys, I suppose. Well, God be with him!"

Now just as the old woman was about to hoist the sack on to her shoulder, the lad rushed forward and said:

"Give it here and I'll carry it for thee, granny! It is all in my way."

The old woman shook her head, but she did put the sack on the lad's shoulder.

And so they trudged down the street together side by side. And the old woman forgot to ask Avdyeeich for the money for the apple. Avdyeeich kept standing and looking after them, and heard how they talked to each other, as they went, about all sorts of things.

Avdyeeich followed them with his eyes till they were out of sight, then he turned homewards and found his glasses on the steps (they were not broken), picked up his awl, and sat down to work again. He worked away for a little while, but soon he was scarcely able to distinguish the stitches, and saw the lamplighter going round

## WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

---

to light the lamps. "I see it is time to light up," thought he, so he trimmed his little lamp, lighted it, and again sat down to work. He finished one boot completely, turned it round and inspected it. "Good!" he cried. He put away his tools, swept up the cuttings, removed the brushes and tips, put away the awl, took down the lamp, placed it on the table, and took down the Gospels from the shelf. He wanted to find the passage where he had last evening placed a strip of morocco leather by way of marker, but he lit upon another place. And just as Avdyeeich opened the Gospel, he recollected his dream of yesterday evening. And no sooner did he call it to mind than it seemed to him as if some persons were moving about and shuffling with their feet behind him. Avdyeeich glanced round and saw that somebody was indeed standing in the dark corner—yes, someone was really there, but who he could not exactly make out. Then a voice whispered in his ear:

"Martin! Martin! dost thou not know me?"

"Who art thou?" cried Avdyeeich.

"'Tis I," cried the voice, "lo, 'tis I!" And forth from the dark corner stepped Stepanuich. He smiled, and it was as though a little cloud were breaking, and he was gone.

"It is I!" cried the voice, and forth from the corner stepped a woman with a little child; and the woman smiled and the child laughed, and they also disappeared.

"And it is I!" cried the voice, and the old woman and the lad with the apple stepped forth, and both of them smiled, and they also disappeared.

And the heart of Avdyeeich was glad. He crossed

## THE SHORT STORY

---

himself, put on his glasses, and began to read the Gospels at the place where he had opened them. And at the top of the page he read these words: "And I was an hungered and thirsty, and ye gave Me to drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."

And at the bottom of the page he read this: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

And Avdyeeich understood that his dream had not deceived him, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had really received Him.

## THE FATHER

By Bjornstjerne Bjornson

Bjornstjerne Bjornson (1832-1910) is one of the two great names in Norwegian literature of recent times. The other is Henrik Ibsen. Bjornson was the son of a village clergyman. He was well educated in the University of Christiania, Norway, and later at Copenhagen, Denmark. His fame as a literary man is due to his work as poet, novelist, and dramatist. His novels depict Norwegian peasant life chiefly. His early work as novelist comprises *Arne* (1858), *A Happy Boy* (1860), and *The Fisher Maiden* (1868). In later life he wrote *Flags Are Flying in Town and Harbor*, and *In God's Way*. A long list of short stories and dramatic pieces add to his fame. For many years he was a leading figure in the dramatic, literary, and political life of Norway. He was director of the Christiania theater from 1865 to 1867. In 1903 he was awarded the Nobel prize in literature.

The man whose story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Overaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

"I have got a son," said he, "and I wish to present him for baptism."

"What shall his name be?"

"Finn — after my father."

"And the sponsors?"

They were mentioned, and proved to be the best men and women of Thord's relations in the parish.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest, and looked up.

## THE SHORT STORY

---

The peasant hesitated a little.

"I should like very much to have him baptized by himself," said he, finally.

"That is to say on a week-day?"

"Next Saturday, at twelve o'clock noon."

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest.

"There is nothing else;" and the peasant twirled his cap, as though he were about to go.

Then the priest rose. "There is yet this, however," said he, and walking toward Thord, he took him by the hand and looked gravely into his eyes: "God grant that the child may become a blessing to you!"

One day sixteen years later, Thord stood once more in the priest's study.

"Really, you carry your age astonishingly well, Thord," said the priest; for he saw no change whatever in the man.

"That is because I have no troubles," replied Thord.

To this the priest said nothing, but after a while he asked: "What is your pleasure this evening?"

"I have come this evening about that son of mine who is to be confirmed tomorrow."

"He is a bright boy."

"I did not wish to pay the priest until I heard what number the boy would have when he takes his place in church tomorrow."

"He will stand number one."

"So I have heard; and here are ten dollars for the priest."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" inquired the priest, fixing his eyes on Thord.

"There is nothing else."



## THE FATHER

---

Thord went out.

Eight years more rolled by, and then one day a noise was heard outside of the priest's study, for many men were approaching, and at their head was Thord, who entered first.

The priest looked up and recognized him.

"You come well attended this evening, Thord," said he.

"I am here to request that the banns may be published for my son; he is about to marry Karen Storliden, daughter of Gudmund, who stands here beside me."

"Why, that is the richest girl in the parish."

"So they say," replied the peasant, stroking back his hair with one hand.

The priest sat a while as if in deep thought, then entered the names in his book, without making any comments, and the men wrote their signatures underneath. Thord laid three dollars on the table.

"One is all I am to have," said the priest.

"I know that very well; but he is my only child. I want to do it handsomely."

The priest took the money.

"This is now the third time, Thord, that you have come here on your son's account."

"But now I am through with him," said Thord, and folding up his pocket-book he said farewell and walked away.

The men slowly followed him.

A fortnight later, the father and son were rowing across the lake, one calm, still day, to Storliden to make arrangements for the wedding.

## THE SHORT STORY

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"This thwart is not secure," said the son, and stood up to straighten the seat on which he was sitting.

At the same moment the board he was standing on slipped from under him; he threw out his arms, uttered a shriek, and fell overboard.

"Take hold of the oar!" shouted the father, springing to his feet and holding out the oar.

But when the son had made a couple of efforts he grew stiff.

"Wait a moment!" cried the father, and began to row toward his son.

Then the son rolled over on his back, gave his father one long look, and sank.

Thord could scarcely believe it; he held the boat still, and stared at the spot where his son had gone down, as though he must surely come to the surface again. There rose some bubbles, then some more, and finally one large one that burst; and the lake lay there as smooth and bright as a mirror again.

For three days and three nights people saw the father rowing round and round the spot, without taking either food or sleep; he was dragging the lake for the body of his son. And toward morning of the third day he found it, and carried it in his arms up over the hills to his gard.

It might have been about a year from that day, when the priest, late one autumn evening, heard someone in the passage outside of the door, carefully trying to find the latch. The priest opened the door, and in walked a tall, thin man, with bowed form and white hair. The priest looked long at him before he recognized him. It was Thord.

## THE FATHER

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“ Are you out walking so late? ” said the priest, and stood still in front of him.

“ Ah, yes! it is late,” said Thord, and took a seat.

The priest sat down also, as though waiting. A long, long silence followed. At last Thord said:

“ I have something with me that I should like to give to the poor; I want it to be invested as a legacy in my son's name.”

He rose, laid some money on the table, and sat down again. The priest counted it.

“ It is a great deal of money,” said he.

“ It is half the price of my gard. I sold it today.”

The priest sat long in silence. At last he asked, but gently:

“ What do you propose to do now, Thord? ”

“ Something better.”

They sat there for a while, Thord with downcast eyes, the priest with his eyes fixed on Thord. Presently the priest said, slowly and softly:

“ I think your son has at last brought you a true blessing.”

“ Yes, I think so myself,” said Thord, looking up, while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.

### STUDY NOTES

The theme is the important thing in this story. State it, and then observe how the author develops it. See how bare of ornament the story is and how simply the theme is treated. Is such a treatment suited to this kind of story? Could a story depending upon exciting incidents be made effective in this manner?

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

By James Hogg

James Hogg (1770-1835) was born at Ettrick, Selkirkshire, Scotland, a year before the birth of Sir Walter Scott. He is commonly known as the "Ettrick Shepherd," and is more famous for his verse than for his prose tales. The story following is from his *Winter Evening Tales*, published in 1820.

A great number of people nowadays are beginning broadly to insinuate that there are no such things as ghosts, or spiritual beings visible to mortal sight. Even Sir Walter Scott is turned renegade, and, with his stories made up of half-and-half, like Nathaniel Gow's toddy, is trying to throw cold water on the most certain, though most impalpable, phenomena of human nature. The bodies are daft. Heaven mend their wits! Before they had ventured to assert such things, I wish they had been where I have often been; or, in particular, where the Laird of Birkendelly was on St. Lawrence's Eve, in the year 1777, and sundry times subsequent to that.

Be it known, then, to every reader of this relation of facts that happened in my own remembrance that the road from Birkendelly to the great muckle village of Balmawhapple (commonly called the muckle town, in opposition to the little town that stood on the other side of the burn) — that road, I say, lay between two thorn-hedges, so well kept by the Laird's hedger, so close, and so high, that a rabbit could not have escaped from the highway into any of the adjoining fields. Along this

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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road was the Laird riding on the Eve of St. Lawrence, in a careless, indifferent manner, with his hat to one side, and his cane dancing a hornpipe before him. He was, moreover, chanting a song to himself; and I have heard people tell what song it was, too. There was once a certain, or rather uncertain, bard, ycleped Robert Burns, who made a number of good songs; but this that the Laird sang was an amorous song of great antiquity, which, like all the said bard's best songs, was sung one hundred and fifty years before he was born. It began thus:

I am the Laird of Windy-wa's,  
I cam nae here without a cause,  
An' I hae gotten forty fa's  
In coming o'er the knowe, joe.  
The night it is baith wind and weet;  
The morn it will be snaw and sleet;  
My shoon are frozen to my feet;  
O, rise an' let me in, joe!  
Let me in this ae night, . . .

This song was the Laird singing, while, at the same time, he was smudging and laughing at the catastrophe, when, ere ever aware, he beheld, a short way before him, an uncommonly elegant and beautiful girl walking in the same direction with him. "Aye," said the Laird to himself, "here is something very attractive indeed! Where the deuce can she have sprung from? She must have risen out of the earth, for I never saw her till this breath. Well, I declare I have not seen such a female figure—I wish I had such an assignation with her as the Laird of Windy-wa's had with his sweetheart."

As the Laird was half-thinking, half-speaking this to himself, the enchanting creature looked back at him



## THE SHORT STORY

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with a motion of intelligence that she knew what he was half-saying, half-thinking, and then vanished over the summit of the rising ground before him, called the Birky Brow. "Aye, go your ways!" said the Laird; "I see by you, you'll not be very hard to overtake. You cannot get off the road, and I'll have a chat with you before you make the Deer's Den."

The Laird jogged on. He did not sing the Laird of Windy-wa's any more, for he felt a stifling about his heart; but he often repeated to himself, "She's a very fine woman!—a very fine woman indeed!—and to be walking here by herself! I cannot comprehend it."

When he reached the summit of the Birky Brow he did not see her, although he had a longer view of the road than before. He thought this very singular, and began to suspect that she wanted to escape him, although apparently rather lingering on him before. "I shall have another look at her, however," thought the Laird, and off he set at a flying trot. No. He came first to one turn, then another. There was nothing of the young lady to be seen. "Unless she take wings and fly away, I shall be up with her," quoth the Laird, and off he set at the full gallop.

In the middle of his career he met with Mr. McMurdie, of Aulton, who hailed him with, "Hilloa, Birkendelly! Where the deuce are you flying at that rate?"

"I was riding after a woman," said the Laird, with great simplicity, reining in his steed.

"Then I am sure no woman on earth can long escape you, unless she be in an air balloon."

"I don't know that. Is she far gone?"

"In which way do you mean?"

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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“ In this.”

“ Aha-ha-ha! Hee-hee-hee! ” nichered McMurdie, misconstruing the Laird’s meaning.

“ What do you laugh at, my dear sir? Do you know her, then? ”

“ Ho-ho-ho! Hee-hee-hee! How should I, or how can I, know her, Birkendelly, unless you inform me who she is? ”

“ Why, that is the very thing I want to know of you. I mean the young lady whom you met just now.”

“ You are raving, Birkendelly. I met no young lady, nor is there a single person on the road I have come by, while you know that for a mile and a half forward your way she could not get out of it.”

“ I know that,” said the Laird, biting his lip and looking greatly puzzled; “ but confound me if I understand this; for I was within speech of her just now on the top of the Birky Brow there, and, when I think of it, she could not have been even thus far as yet. She had on a pure white gauze frock, a small green bonnet and feathers, and a green veil, which, flung back over her left shoulder, hung below her waist, and was altogether such an engaging figure that no man could have passed her on the road without taking some note of her. Are you not making game of me? Did you not really meet with her? ”

“ On my word of truth and honor, I did not. Come, ride back with me, and we shall meet her still, depend on it. She has given you the go-by on the road. Let us go; I am only to call at the mill about some barley for the distillery, and will return with you to the big town.”

## THE SHORT STORY

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Birkendelly returned with his friend. The sun was not yet set, yet McMurdie could not help observing that the Laird looked thoughtful and confused, and not a word could he speak about anything save this lovely apparition with the white frock and the green veil; and lo! when they reached the top of Birky Brow there was the maiden again before them, and exactly at the same spot where the Laird first saw her before, only walking in the contrary direction.

“ Well, this is the most extraordinary thing that I ever knew! ” exclaimed the Laird.

“ What is it, sir? ” said McMurdie.

“ How that young lady could have eluded me,” returned the Laird. “ See, here she is still! ”

“ I beg your pardon, sir, I don’t see her. Where is she? ”

“ There, on the other side of the angle; but you are short-sighted. See, there she is ascending the other eminence in her white frock and green veil, as I told you. What a lovely creature! ”

“ Well, well, we have her fairly before us now, and shall see what she is like at all events,” said McMurdie.

Between the Birky Brow and this other slight eminence there is an obtuse angle of the road at the part where it is lowest, and, in passing this, the two friends necessarily lost sight of the object of their curiosity. They pushed on at a quick pace, cleared the low angle — the maiden was not there! They rode full speed to the top of the eminence from whence a long extent of road was visible before them — there was no human creature in view. McMurdie laughed aloud, but the Laird turned pale as death and bit his lip. His friend asked him

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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good-humoredly why he was so much affected. He said, because he could not comprehend the meaning of this singular apparition or illusion, and it troubled him the more as he now remembered a dream of the same nature which he had had, and which terminated in a dreadful manner.

“Why, man, you are dreaming still,” said McMurdie. “But, never mind; it is quite common for men of your complexion to dream of beautiful maidens with white frocks, and green veils, bonnets, feathers, and slender waists. It is a lovely image, the creation of your own sanguine imagination, and you may worship it without any blame. Were her shoes black or green? And her stockings—did you note them? The symmetry of the limbs, I am sure you did! Good-bye; I see you are not disposed to leave the spot. Perhaps she will appear to you again.”

So saying, McMurdie rode on toward the mill, and Birkendelly, after musing for some time, turned his beast's head slowly round, and began to move toward the great muckle village.

The Laird's feelings were now in terrible commotion. He was taken beyond measure with the beauty and elegance of the figure he had seen, but he remembered, with a mixture of admiration and horror, that a dream of the same enchanting object had haunted his slumbers all the days of his life; yet, how singular that he should never have recollected the circumstance till now! But farther, with the dream there were connected some painful circumstances which, though terrible in their issue, he could not recollect so as to form them into any degree of arrangement.



## THE SHORT STORY

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As he was considering deeply of these things and riding slowly down the declivity, neither dancing his cane nor singing the Laird of Windy-wa's, he lifted up his eyes, and there was the girl on the same spot where he saw her first, walking deliberately up the Birky Brow. The sun was down, but it was the month of August and a fine evening, and the Laird, seized with an unconquerable desire to see and speak with that incomparable creature, could restrain himself no longer, but shouted out to her to stop till he came up. She beckoned acquiescence, and slackened her pace into a slow movement. The Laird turned the corner quickly, but when he had rounded it the maiden was still there, though on the summit of the brow. She turned round, and, with an ineffable smile and curtsy, saluted him, and again moved slowly on. She vanished gradually beyond the summit, and while the green feathers were still nodding in view, and so nigh that the Laird could have touched them with a fishing-rod, he reached the top of the brow himself. There was no living soul there, nor onward, as far as his view reached. He now trembled in every limb, and, without knowing what he did, rode straight on to the big town, not daring well to return and see what he had seen for three several times; and certain he would see it again when the shades of evening were deepening, he deemed it proper and prudent to decline the pursuit of such a phantom any farther.

He alighted at the Queen's Head, called for some brandy and water, quite forgot what was his errand to the great muckle town that afternoon, there being nothing visible to his mental sight but lovely images, with white gauze frocks and green veils. His friend McMur-



## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

---

die joined him; they drank deep, bantered, reasoned, got angry, reasoned themselves calm again, and still all would not do. The Laird was conscious that he had seen the beautiful apparition, and, moreover, that she was the very maiden, or the resemblance of her, who, in the irrevocable decrees of Providence, was destined to be his. It was in vain that McMurdie reasoned of impressions on the imagination, and

Of fancy moulding in the mind,  
Light visions on the passing wind.

Vain also was a story that he told him of a relation of his own, who was greatly harassed by the apparition of an officer in a red uniform that haunted him day and night, and had very nigh put him quite distracted several times, till at length his physician found out the nature of this illusion so well that he knew, from the state of his pulse, to an hour when the ghost of the officer would appear, and by bleeding, low diet, and emollients contrived to keep the apparition away altogether.

The Laird admitted the singularity of this incident, but not that it was one in point; for the one, he said, was imaginary, the other real, and that no conclusions could convince him in opposition to the authority of his own senses. He accepted of an invitation to spend a few days with McMurdie and his family, but they all acknowledged afterward that the Laird was very much like one bewitched.

As soon as he reached home he went straight to the Birky Brow, certain of seeing once more the angelic phantom, but she was not there. He took each of his former positions again and again, but the desired vision

## THE SHORT STORY

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would in no wise make its appearance. He tried every day and every hour of the day, all with the same effect, till he grew absolutely desperate, and had the audacity to kneel on the spot and entreat of Heaven to see her. Yes, he called on Heaven to see her once more, whatever she was, whether a being of earth, heaven, or hell.

He was now in such a state of excitement that he could not exist; he grew listless, impatient, and sickly, took to his bed, and sent for McMurdie and the doctor; and the issue of the consultation was that Birkendelly consented to leave the country for a season, on a visit to his only sister in Ireland, whither we must accompany him for a short space.

His sister was married to Captain Bryan, younger, of Scoresby, and they two lived in a cottage on the estate, and the Captain's parents and sisters at Scoresby Hall. Great was the stir and preparation when the gallant young Laird of Birkendelly arrived at the cottage, it never being doubted that he came to forward a second bond of connection with the family, which still contained seven dashing sisters, all unmarried, and all alike willing to change that solitary and helpless state for the envied one of matrimony — a state highly popular among the young women of Ireland. Some of the Misses Bryan had now reached the years of womanhood, several of them scarcely, but these small disqualifications made no difference in the estimation of the young ladies themselves; each and all of them brushed up for the competition with high hopes and unflinching resolutions. True, the elder ones tried to check the younger in their good-natured, forthright Irish way; but they retorted, and persisted in their superior pretensions. Then there was

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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such shopping in the county town! It was so boundless that the credit of the Hall was finally exhausted, and the old Squire was driven to remark that "Och, and to be sure it was a dreadful and tirrabbell concussion, to be put upon the equipment of seven daughters all at the same moment, as if the young gentleman could marry them all! Och, then, poor dear shoul, he would be after finding that one was sufficient, if not one too many. And therefore there was no occasion, none at all, at all, and that there was not, for any of them to rig out more than one."

It was hinted that the Laird had some reason for complaint at this time, but as the lady sided with her daughters, he had no chance. One of the items of his account was thirty-seven buckling-combs, then greatly in vogue. There were black combs, pale combs, yellow combs, and gilt ones, all to suit or set off various complexions; and if other articles bore any proportion at all to these, it had been better for the Laird and all his family that Birkendelly had never set foot in Ireland.

The plan was all concocted. There was to be a grand dinner at the Hall, at which the damsels were to appear in all their finery. A ball to follow, and note be taken which of the young ladies was their guest's choice, and measures taken accordingly. The dinner and the ball took place; and what a pity I may not describe that entertainment, the dresses, and the dancers, for they were all exquisite in their way, and *outré* beyond measure. But such details only serve to derange a winter evening's tale such as this.

Birkendelly having at this time but one model for his choice among womankind, all that ever he did while in

## THE SHORT STORY

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the presence of ladies was to look out for some resemblance to her, the angel of his fancy; and it so happened that in one of old Bryan's daughters named Luna, or, more familiarly, Loony, he perceived, or thought he perceived, some imaginary similarity in form and air to the lovely apparition. This was the sole reason why he was incapable of taking his eyes off from her the whole of that night; and this incident settled the point, not only with the old people, but even the young ladies were forced, after every exertion on their own parts, to "yild the p'int to their sister Loony, who certainly was not the mist genteelest nor mist handsomest of that guid-lucking fimily."

The next day Lady Luna was dispatched off to the cottage in grand style, there to live hand in glove with her supposed lover. There was no standing all this. There were the two paddocked together, like a ewe and a lamb, early and late; and though the Laird really appeared to have, and probably had, some delight in her company, it was only in contemplating that certain indefinable air of resemblance which she bore to the sole image impressed on his heart. He bought her a white gauze frock, a green bonnet and feather, with a veil, which she was obliged to wear thrown over her left shoulder, and every day after, six times a day, was she obliged to walk over a certain eminence at a certain distance before her lover. She was delighted to oblige him; but still, when he came up, he looked disappointed, and never said, "Luna, I love you; when are we to be married?" No, he never said any such thing, for all her looks and expressions of fondest love; for, alas! in all this dalliance he was only feeding a mysterious flame



## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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that preyed upon his vitals, and proved too severe for the powers either of reason or religion to extinguish. Still, time flew lighter and lighter by, his health was restored, the bloom of his cheek returned, and the frank and simple confidence of Luna had a certain charm with it that reconciled him to his sister's Irish economy. But a strange incident now happened to him which deranged all his immediate plans.

He was returning from angling one evening, a little before sunset, when he saw Lady Luna awaiting him on his way home. But instead of rushing up to meet him as usual, she turned, and walked up the rising ground before him.

"Poor sweet girl! how condescending she is," said he to himself, "and how like she is in reality to the angelic being whose form and features are so deeply impressed on my heart! I now see it is no fond or fancied resemblance. It is real! real! real! How I long to clasp her in my arms, and tell her how I love her; for, after all, that is the girl that is to be mine, and the former a vision to impress this the more on my heart."

He posted up the ascent to overtake her. When at the top she turned, smiled, and curtsied. Good heavens! it was the identical lady of his fondest adoration herself, but lovelier, far lovelier, than ever. He expected every moment that she would vanish, as was her wont; but she did not—she awaited him, and received his embraces with open arms. She was a being of real flesh and blood, courteous, elegant, and affectionate. He kissed her hand, he kissed her glowing cheek, and blessed all the powers of love who had thus restored her to him



## THE SHORT STORY

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again, after undergoing pangs of love such as man never suffered.

“ But, dearest heart, here we are standing in the middle of the highway,” said he; “ suffer me to conduct you to my sister’s house, where you shall have an apartment with a child of nature having some slight resemblance to yourself.” She smiled, and said, “ No, I will not sleep with Lady Luna tonight. Will you please to look round you, and see where you are.” He did so, and behold they were standing on the Birky Brow, on the only spot where he had ever seen her. She smiled at his embarrassed look, and asked if he did not remember aught of his coming over from Ireland. He said he thought he did remember something of it, but love with him had long absorbed every other sense. He then asked her to his own house, which she declined, saying she could only meet him on that spot till after their marriage, which could not be before St. Lawrence’s Eve come three years. “ And now,” said she, “ we must part. My name is Jane Ogilvie, and you were betrothed to me before you were born. But I am come to release you this evening, if you have the slightest objection.”

He declared he had none; and kneeling, swore the most solemn oath to be hers forever, and to meet her there on St. Lawrence’s Eve next, and every St. Lawrence’s Eve until that blessed day on which she had consented to make him happy by becoming his own forever. She then asked him affectionately to change rings with her, in pledge of their faith and troth, in which he joyfully acquiesced; for she could not have then asked any conditions which in the fulness of his heart’s love, he would not have granted; and after one fond and affectionate

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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kiss, and repeating all their engagements over again, they parted.

Birkendelly's heart was now melted within him, and all his senses overpowered by one overwhelming passion. On leaving his fair and kind one, he got bewildered, and could not find the road to his own house, believing sometimes that he was going there, and sometimes to his sister's, till at length he came, as he thought, upon the Liffey, at its junction with Loch Allan; and there, in attempting to call for a boat, he awoke from a profound sleep, and found himself lying in his bed within his sister's house, and the day sky just breaking.

If he was puzzled to account for some things in the course of his dream, he was much more puzzled to account for them now that he was wide awake. He was sensible that he had met his love, had embraced, kissed, and exchanged vows and rings with her, and, in token of the truth and reality of all these, her emerald ring was on his finger, and his own away; so there was no doubt that they had met — by what means it was beyond the power of man to calculate.

There was then living with Mrs. Bryan an old Scots-woman, commonly styled Lucky Black. She had nursed Birkendelly's mother, and been dry-nurse to himself and sister; and having more than a mother's attachment for the latter, when she was married, old Lucky left her country to spend the last of her days in the house of her beloved young lady. When the Laird entered the breakfast-parlor that morning she was sitting in her black velvet hood, as usual, reading *The Fourfold State of Man*, and, being paralytic and somewhat deaf, she seldom regarded those who went or came. But chancing

## THE SHORT STORY

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to hear him say something about the ninth of August, she quitted reading, turned round her head to listen, and then asked, in a hoarse, tremulous voice: "What's that he's saying? What's the unlucky callant saying about the ninth of August? Aih? To be sure it is St. Lawrence's Eve, although the tenth be his day. It's ower true, ower true, ower true for him an' a' his kin, poor man! Aih? What was he saying then?"

The men smiled at her incoherent earnestness, but the lady, with true feminine condescension, informed her, in a loud voice, that Allan had an engagement in Scotland on St. Lawrence's Eve. She then started up, extended her shriveled hands, that shook like the aspen, and panted out: "Aih, aih? Lord preserve us! Whaten an engagement has he on St. Lawrence's Eve? Bind him! bind him! Shackle him wi' bands of steel, and of brass, and of iron! Oh, may He whose blessed will was pleased to leave him an orphan sae soon, preserve him from the fate which I tremble to think on!"

She then tottered round the table, as with supernatural energy, and seizing the Laird's right hand, she drew it close to her unstable eyes, and then perceiving the emerald ring chased in blood, she threw up her arms with a jerk, opened her skinny jaws with a fearful gape, and uttering a shriek that made all the house yell, and every one within it to tremble, she fell back lifeless and rigid on the floor. The gentlemen both fled, out of sheer terror; but a woman never deserts her friends in extremity. The lady called her maids about her, had her old nurse conveyed to bed, where every means were used to restore animation. But, alas, life was extinct! The vital spark had fled forever, which filled all their hearts with grief,

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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disappointment, and horror, as some dreadful tale of mystery was now sealed up from their knowledge, which, in all likelihood, no other could reveal. But to say the truth, the Laird did not seem greatly disposed to probe it to the bottom.

Not all the arguments of Captain Bryan and his lady, nor the simple entreaties of Lady Luna, could induce Birkendelly to put off his engagement to meet his love on the Birky Brow on the evening of the ninth of August; but he promised soon to return, pretending that some business of the utmost importance called him away. Before he went, however, he asked his sister if ever she had heard of such a lady in Scotland as Jane Ogilvie. Mrs. Bryan repeated the name many times to herself, and said that the name undoubtedly was once familiar to her, although she thought not for good, but at that moment she did not recollect one single individual of the name. He then showed her the emerald ring that had been the death of Lucky Black; but the moment the lady looked at it, she made a grasp at it to take it off by force, which she had very nearly effected. "Oh, burn it! burn it!" cried she; "it is not a right ring! Burn it!"

"My dear sister, what fault is in the ring?" said he. "It is a very pretty ring, and one that I set great value by."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, burn it, and renounce the giver!" cried she. "If you have any regard for your peace here or your soul's welfare hereafter, burn that ring! If you saw with your own eyes, you would easily perceive that that is not a ring befitting a Christian to wear."

This speech confounded Birkendelly a good deal. He



## THE SHORT STORY

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retired by himself and examined the ring, and could see nothing in it unbecoming a Christian to wear. It was a chased gold ring, with a bright emerald, which last had a red foil, in some lights giving it a purple gleam, and inside was engraven *Elegit*, much defaced, but that his sister could not see; therefore he could not comprehend her vehement injunctions concerning it. But that it might no more give her offence, or any other, he sewed it within his vest, opposite his heart, judging that there was something in it which his eyes were withholden from discerning.

Thus he left Ireland with his mind in great confusion, groping his way, as it were, in a hole of mystery, yet with the passion that preyed on his heart and vitals more intense than ever. He seems to have had an impression all his life that some mysterious fate awaited him, which the correspondence of his dreams and day visions tended to confirm. And though he gave himself wholly up to the sway of one overpowering passion, it was not without some yearnings of soul, manifestations of terror, and so much earthly shame, that he never more mentioned his love, or his engagements, to any human being, not even to his friend McMurdie, whose company he forthwith shunned.

It is on this account that I am unable to relate what passed between the lovers thenceforward. It is certain they met at the Birky Brow that St. Lawrence's Eve, for they were seen in company together; but of the engagements, vows, or dalliance that passed between them I can say nothing; nor of all their future meetings, until the beginning of August, 1781, when the Laird began decidedly to make preparations for his approach-



## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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ing marriage; yet not as if he and his betrothed had been going to reside at Birkendelly, all his provisions rather bespeaking a meditated journey.

On the morning of the ninth he wrote to his sister, and then arraying himself in his new wedding suit, and putting the emerald ring on his finger, he appeared all impatience, until toward evening, when he sallied out on horseback to his appointment. It seems that his mysterious inamorata had met him, for he was seen riding through the big town before sunset, with a young lady behind him, dressed in white and green, and the villagers affirmed that they were riding at the rate of fifty miles an hour! They were seen to pass a cottage called Mosskilt, ten miles farther on, where there was no highway, at the same tremendous speed; and I could never hear that they were any more seen, until the following morning, when Birkendelly's fine bay horse was found lying dead at his own stable door; and shortly after his master was likewise discovered lying, a blackened corpse, on the Birky Brow at the very spot where the mysterious but lovely dame had always appeared to him. There was neither wound, bruise, nor dislocation in his whole frame; but his skin was of a livid color, and his features terribly distorted.

This woful catastrophe struck the neighborhood with great consternation, so that nothing else was talked of. Every ancient tradition and modern incident were raked together, compared, and combined; and certainly a most rare concatenation of misfortunes was elicited. It was authenticated that his father had died on the same spot that day twenty years, and his grandfather that day forty years, the former, as was supposed, by a fall from

## THE SHORT STORY

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his horse when in liquor, and the latter, nobody knew how; and now this Allan was the last of his race, for Mrs. Bryan had no children.

It was, moreover, now remembered by many, and among the rest by the Rev. Joseph Taylor, that he had frequently observed a young lady, in white and green, sauntering about the spot on a St. Lawrence's Eve.

When Captain Bryan and his lady arrived to take possession of the premises, they instituted a strict inquiry into every circumstance; but nothing further than what was related to them by Mr. McMurdie could be learned of this Mysterious Bride, besides what the Laird's own letter bore. It ran thus:

Dearest Sister — I shall before this time tomorrow be the most happy, or most miserable, of mankind, having solemnly engaged myself this night to wed a young and beautiful lady, named Jane Ogilvie, to whom it seems I was betrothed before I was born. Our correspondence has been of a most private and mysterious nature; but my troth is pledged, and my resolution fixed. We set out on a far journey to the place of her abode on the nuptial eve, so that it will be long before I see you again. Yours till death,

ALLAN GEORGE SANDISON.

BIRKENDELLY, *August 8, 1781.*

That very same year, an old woman, named Marion Haw, was returned upon that, her native parish, from Glasgow. She had led a migratory life with her son — who was what he called a bell-hanger, but in fact a tinker of the worst grade — for many years, and was at last returned to the muckle town in a state of great destitution. She gave the parishioners a history of the Mysterious Bride, so plausibly correct, but withal so romantic, that everybody said of it (as is often said of

## THE MYSTERIOUS BRIDE

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my narratives, with the same narrow-minded prejudice and injustice) that it was a made story. There were, however, some strong testimonies of its veracity.

She said that the first Allan Sandison, who married the great heiress of Birkendelly, was previously engaged to a beautiful young lady named Jane Ogilvie, to whom he gave anything but fair play; and, as she believed, either murdered her, or caused her to be murdered, in the midst of a thicket of birch and broom, at a spot which she mentioned; and she had good reason for believing so, as she had seen the red blood and the new grave, when she was a little girl, and ran home and mentioned it to her grandfather, who charged her as she valued her life never to mention that again, as it was only the nom-bles and hide of a deer which he himself had buried there. But when, twenty years subsequent to that, the wicked and unhappy Allan Sandison was found dead on that very spot, and lying across the green mound, then nearly level with the surface, which she had once seen a new grave, she then for the first time ever thought of a Divine Providence; and she added, "For my grandfather, Neddy Haw, he dee'd too; there's naebody kens how, nor ever shall."

As they were quite incapable of conceiving from Marion's description anything of the spot, Mr. McMurdie caused her to be taken out to the Birky Brow in a cart, accompanied by Mr. Taylor and some hundreds of the town's folks; but whenever she saw it, she said, "Aha, birkies! the haill kintra's altered now. There was nae road here than; it gaed straight ower the tap o' the hill. An' let me see — there's the thorn where the cushats biggit; an' there's the auld birk that I ance

## THE SHORT STORY

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fell aff an' left my shoe sticking i' the cleft. I can tell ye, birkies, either the deer's grave or bonny Jane Ogilvie's is no twa yards aff the place where that Horse's hind-feet are standin'; sae ye may howk, an' see if there be ony remains."

The minister and McMurdie and all the people stared at one another, for they had purposely caused the horse to stand still on the very spot where both the father and son had been found dead. They digged, and deep, deep below the road they found part of the slender bones and skull of a young female, which they deposited decently in the church-yard. The family of the Sandisons is extinct, the Mysterious Bride appears no more on the Eve of St. Lawrence, and the wicked people of the great muckle village have got a lesson on divine justice written to them in lines of blood.

### STUDY NOTES

Here is a tale written before men became *conscious* of the means which might be employed to advantage in story telling. Examine its structure. Compare it with a modern ghost story. Does it employ the greatest economy of means? or are there episodes that might have been omitted without detracting from the effectiveness of the tale?

## THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:11-32

The Prodigal Son is one of the parables of Jesus. It is, of course, deliberate fiction told to make a great truth plain. No title was given for it, but this story is always called *The Prodigal Son*, though *The Forgiving Father* would be more appropriate. For a careful technical analysis of this story see Mr. Clayton Hamilton's *Materials and Methods of Fiction*, Chapter II, page 196.

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'"



## THE SHORT STORY

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And he arose, and came to his father.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound."

And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living . . . thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

And he said unto him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

"It was meet that we should make merry, and be

## THE PRODIGAL SON

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glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

### STUDY NOTES

Notice the economy of material in this story. Only three characters are used. Can any one of them be dispensed with? If this is just the story of a young man who repents for his waywardness, why not close the story with: "And they began to be merry?" There are only two incidents. Why not make several of his experiences in the "far country"? Does the absence of ornamentation in the language, in elaboration of setting, in delineation of character, etc., make for, or detract from, the distinctness of the impression made by the theme? Can you think of any good effect that might have been produced by a fuller treatment of the story, which would not have weakened the impression of the theme?

## THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT \*

By Prosper Mérimée

Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870), the French novelist, critic, historian, and statesman, was born at Paris and died at Cannes. As a statesman he rose to the rank of senator in 1853. As a historian he has a number of volumes to his credit. His novel *Columba* (1830) is pretty generally considered his best piece of fiction.

A military friend of mine, who died of a fever in Greece a few years ago, told me one day about the first action in which he took part. His story made such an impression on me that I wrote it down from memory as soon as I had time. Here it is:

I joined the regiment on the fourth of September, in the evening. I found the colonel in camp. He received me rather roughly; but when he read General B ——'s recommendation, his manner changed, and he said a few courteous words to me.

I was presented by him to my captain, who had just returned from a reconnaissance. This captain, with whom I hardly had time to become acquainted, was a tall, dark man, with a harsh, repellant face. He had been a private and had won his epaulets and his cross on the battlefield. His voice, which was hoarse and weak, contrasted strangely with his almost gigantic stature. I was told that he owed that peculiar voice to

\* Reprinted from *Little French Masterpieces*, with the consent of the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

## THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT

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a bullet which had passed through his lungs at the battle of Jena.

When he learned that I was fresh from the school at Fontainebleau, he made a wry face and said:

“ My lieutenant died yesterday.”

I understood that he meant to imply: “ You ought to take his place, and you are not capable of it.”

A sharp retort came to my lips, but I restrained myself.

The moon rose behind the redoubt of Cheverino, about two gunshots from our bivouac. It was large and red, as it usually is when it rises. But on that evening it seemed to me of extraordinary size. For an instant the redoubt stood sharply out in black against the brilliant disk of the moon. It resembled the crater of a volcano at the instant of an eruption.

An old soldier, beside whom I happened to be, remarked upon the color of the moon.

“ It is very red,” said he; “ that’s a sign that it will cost us dear to take that famous redoubt! ”

I have always been superstitious, and that prophecy, at that particular moment especially, affected me. I lay down, but I could not sleep. I rose and walked about for some time, watching the tremendously long line of camp-fires that covered the heights above the village of Cheverino.

When I thought that the fresh, sharp night air had cooled my blood sufficiently, I returned to the fire; I wrapped myself carefully in my cloak and closed my eyes, hoping not to open them before dawn. But sleep refused to come. Insensibly my thoughts took a gloomy turn. I said to myself that I had not a friend among the

## THE SHORT STORY

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hundred thousand men who covered that plain. If I were wounded, I should be taken to a hospital and treated roughly by ignorant surgeons. All that I had heard of surgical operations came to my mind. My heart beat violently, and I instinctively arranged my handkerchief, and the wallet that I had in my breast pocket, as a sort of cuirass. I was worn out with fatigue, I nodded every moment, and every moment some sinister thought returned with renewed force and roused me with a start.

But weariness carried the day, and when they beat the reveille, I was sound asleep. We were drawn up in battle array, the roll was called, then we stacked arms, and everything indicated that we were to have a quiet day.

About three o'clock an aide-de-camp appeared, bringing an order. We were ordered under arms again; our skirmishers spread out over the plain; we followed them slowly, and after about twenty minutes, we saw all the advanced posts of the Russians fall back and return inside the redoubt.

A battery of artillery came into position at our right, another at our left, but both well in advance of us. They began a very hot fire at the enemy, who replied vigorously, and the redoubt of Cheverino soon disappeared beneath dense clouds of smoke.

Our regiment was almost protected from the Russian fire by a rise in the ground. Their balls, which, indeed, were rarely aimed at us, for they preferred to fire at our gunners, passed over our heads, or, at the worst, spattered us with dirt and small stones.

As soon as we received the order to advance, my captain looked at me with a close scrutiny which compelled



## THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT

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me to run my hand over my budding moustache twice or thrice, as unconcernedly as I could. Indeed, I was not frightened, and the only fear I had was that he should believe that I was frightened. Those harmless cannon-balls helped to maintain me in my heroically calm frame of mind. My self-esteem told me that I was really in danger, as I was at last under the fire of a battery. I was overjoyed to be so entirely at my ease, and I thought of the pleasure I should take in telling of the capture of the redoubt of Cheverino in Madame de B —— 's salon on Rue de Provence.

The colonel passed our company; he spoke to me:

“ Well, you are going to see some sharp work for your debut.”

I smiled with an altogether martial air as I brushed my coat sleeve, on which a shot that struck the ground thirty yards away had spattered a little dust.

It seems that the Russians observed the ill success of their cannon-balls; for they replaced them with shells, which could more easily be made to reach us in the hollow where we were posted. A large piece of one took off my shako and killed a man near me.

“ I congratulate you,” said my captain, as I picked up my shako; “ you’re safe now for today.”

I was acquainted with the military superstition which believes that the axiom, *Non bis in idem*, has the same application on a field of battle as in a court of justice. I proudly replaced my shako on my head.

“ That is making a fellow salute rather unceremoniously,” I said as gaily as I could. That wretched joke was considered first-rate, in view of the circumstances.

“ I congratulate you,” continued the captain; “ you

## THE SHORT STORY

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will get nothing worse, and you will command a company this evening; for I feel that the oven is being heated for me. Every time that I have been wounded the officer nearest me has been hit by a spent ball; and," he added in a low tone and almost as if he were ashamed, "their names always began with a P."

I feigned incredulity; many men would have done the same; many men, too, would have been, as I was, profoundly impressed by these prophetic words. Conscript as I was, I realized that I could not confide my sensations to any one, and that I must always appear cool and fearless.

After about half an hour the Russian fire sensibly diminished; thereupon we left our sheltered position to march upon the redoubt.

Our regiment consisted of three battalions. The second was ordered to turn the redoubt on the side of the entrance; the other two were to make the assault. I was in the third battalion.

As we came out from behind the species of ridge which had protected us, we were received by several volleys of musketry, which did little damage in our ranks. The whistling of the bullets surprised me; I kept turning my head, and thus induced divers jests on the part of my comrades, who were more familiar with that sound.

"Take it all in all," I said to myself, "a battle isn't such a terrible thing."

*Non bis in idem*, never twice in the same place.

We advanced at the double-quick, preceded by skirmishers; suddenly the Russians gave three hurrahs, three distinct hurrahs, then remained silent and ceased firing.

## THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT

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“ I don't like this silence,” said my captain; “ it bodes us no good.”

I considered that our men were a little too noisy, and I could not forbear making a mental comparison between their tumultuous shouting and the enemy's impressive silence.

We speedily reached the foot of the redoubt; the palisades had been shattered and the earth torn up by our balls. The soldiers rushed at these newly made ruins with shouts of “ Vive l'Empereur! ” louder than one would have expected to hear from men who had already shouted so much.

I raised my eyes, and I shall never forget the spectacle that I saw. The greater part of the smoke had risen, and hung like a canopy about twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish haze one could see the Russian grenadiers behind their half-destroyed parapet, with arms raised, motionless as statues. It seems to me that I can see now each soldier, with his left eye fastened upon us, the right hidden by the levelled musket. In an embrasure, a few yards away, a man stood beside a cannon, holding a fusee.

I shuddered, and I thought that my last hour had come.

“ The dance is going to begin,” cried my captain. “ Bonsoir! ”

Those were the last words I heard him utter.

The drums rolled inside the redoubt. I saw all the muskets drop. I closed my eyes, and I heard a most appalling crash, followed by shrieks and groans. I opened my eyes, surprised to find myself still among the living. The redoubt was filled with smoke once more. I

was surrounded by dead and wounded. My captain lay at my feet; his head had been shattered by a cannon-ball, and I was covered with his brains and his blood. Of all my company only six men and myself were left on our feet.

This carnage was succeeded by a moment of stupefaction. The colonel, placing his hat on the point of his sword, was the first to scale the parapet, shouting: "Vive l'Empereur!" He was followed instantly by all the survivors. I have a very dim remembrance of what followed. We entered the redoubt; how, I have no idea. We fought hand to hand, amid smoke so dense that we could not see one another. I believe that I struck, for my sabre was all bloody. At last I heard shouts of "Victory!" and as the smoke grew less dense, I saw blood and corpses completely covering the surface of the redoubt. The guns especially were buried beneath piles of bodies. About two hundred men, in the French uniform, were standing about in groups, with no pretence of order, some loading their muskets, others wiping their bayonets. Eleven hundred Russian prisoners were with them.

The colonel, covered with blood, was lying on a shattered caisson near the ravine. A number of soldiers were bustling about him. I approached.

"Where is the senior captain?" he asked a sergeant.

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders most expressively.

"And the senior lieutenant?"

"Monsieur here, who arrived last night," said the sergeant, in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone.

The colonel smiled bitterly.

"Well, monsieur," he said, "you command in chief,

## THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT

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order the entrance to the redoubt to be strengthened with these wagons, for the enemy is in force; but General C — will see that you are supported.”

“Colonel,” I said, “are you severely wounded?”

“Finished, my boy, but the redoubt is taken!”



## ON THE STAIRS \*

By Arthur Morrison

Arthur Morrison (1863- ) is an English writer. His works consist of novels, stories, plays, and articles. *On the Stairs* is from a volume of stories entitled *Tales of Mean Streets*.

The house had been "genteel." When trade was prospering in the East End, and the ship-fitter or block-maker thought it no shame to live in the parish where his workshop lay, such a master had lived here. Now, it was a tall, solid, well-bricked, ugly house, grimy and paintless in the joinery, cracked and patched in the windows: where the front door stood open all day long; and the womankind sat on the steps, talking of sickness and deaths and the cost of things; and treacherous holes lurked in the carpet of road-soil on the stairs and in the passage. For when eight families live in a house, nobody buys a door-mat, and the street was one of those streets that are always muddy. It smelt, too, of many things, none of them pleasant (one was fried fish); but for all that it was not a slum.

Three flights up, a gaunt woman with bare forearms stayed on her way to listen at a door which, opening, let out a warm, fetid waft from a close sick-room. A bent and tottering old woman stood on the threshold, holding the door behind her.

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## ON THE STAIRS

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“ An’ is ’e no better now, Mrs. Curtis? ” the gaunt woman asked, with a nod at the opening.

The old woman shook her head, and pulled the door closer. Her jaw wagged loosely in her withered chaps: “ Nor won’t be; till ’e’s gone.” Then after a certain pause, “ ’E’s goin’,” she said.

“ Don’t doctor give no ’ope? ”

“ Lor’ bless ye, I don’t want to ast no doctors,” Mrs. Curtis replied, with something not unlike a chuckle. “ I’ve seed too many on ’em. The boy’s a-goin’, fast; I can see that. An’ then ” — she gave the handle another tug, and whispered — “ he’s been called.” She nodded amain. “ Three seprit knocks at the bed-head las’ night; an’ I know what *that* means! ”

The gaunt woman raised her brows, and nodded. “ Ah, well,” she said, “ we all on us comes to it some day, sooner or later. An’ it’s often a ’appy release.”

The two looked into space beyond each other, the elder with a nod and a croak. Presently the other pursued, “ ’E’s been a very good son, ain’t ’e? ”

“ Ay, ay, well enough son to me,” responded the old woman, a little peevishly; “ an’ I’ll ’ave ’im put away decent, though there’s on’y the Union for me after. I can do that, thank Gawd! ” she added, meditatively, as chin on fist she stared into the thickening dark over the stairs.

“ When I lost my pore ’usband,” said the gaunt woman, with a certain brightening, “ I give ’im a ’an-some funeral. ’E was a Oddfeller, an’ I got twelve pound. I ’ad a oak caufin an’ a open ’earse. There was a kerridge for the fam’ly an’ one for ’is mates — two ’orses each, an’ feathers, an’ mutes; an’ it went the

furthest way round to the cimitry. 'Wotever 'appens, Mrs. Manders,' says the undertaker, 'you'll feel as you've treated 'im proper; nobody can't reproach you over that.' An' they couldn't. 'E was a good 'usband to me, an' I buried 'im respectable."

The gaunt woman exulted. The old, old story of Manders's funeral fell upon the other one's ears with a freshened interest, and she mumbled her gums ruminantly. "Bob'll 'ave a 'ansome buryin', too," she said. "I can make it up, with the insurance money, an' this an' that. On'y I donno about mutes. It's a expense."

In the East End, when a woman has not enough money to buy a thing much desired, she does not say so in plain words; she says the thing is an "expense," or a "great expense." It means the same thing, but it sounds better. Mrs. Curtis had reckoned her resources, and found that mutes would be an "expense." At a cheap funeral mutes cost half-a-sovereign and their liquor. Mrs. Manders said as much.

"Yus, yus, 'arf-a-sovereign," the old woman assented. Within, the sick man feebly beat the floor with a stick. "I'm a-comin'," she cried shrilly; "yus, 'arf-a-sovereign, but it's a lot, an' I don't see 'ow I'm to do it — not at present." She reached for the door-handle again, but stopped and added, by after-thought, "Unless I don't 'ave no ploods."

"It 'ud be a pity not to 'ave ploods. I 'ad —"

There were footsteps on the stairs: then a stumble and a testy word. Mrs. Curtis peered over into the gathering dark. "Is it the doctor, sir?" she asked. It was the doctor's assistant; and Mrs. Manders tramped up to the next landing as the door of the sick-room took him in.

## ON THE STAIRS

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For five minutes the stairs were darker than ever. Then the assistant, a very young man, came out again, followed by the old woman with a candle. Mrs. Manders listened in the upper dark. "He's sinking fast," said the assistant. "He *must* have a stimulant. Dr. Mansell ordered port wine. Where is it?" Mrs. Curtis mumbled dolorously. "I tell you he *must* have it," he averred with unprofessional emphasis (his qualification was only a month old). "The man can't take solid food, and his strength must be kept up somehow. Another day may make all the difference. Is it because you can't afford it?" "It's a expense — sich a expense, doctor," the old woman pleaded. "An' wot with 'arf-pints o' milk an'—" She grew inarticulate, and mumbled dismally.

"But he must have it, Mrs. Curtis, if it's your last shilling: it's the only way. If you mean you absolutely haven't the money —" and he paused a little awkwardly. He was not a wealthy young man — wealthy young men do not devil for East End doctors — but he was conscious of a certain haul of sixpences at nap the night before; and, being inexperienced, he did not foresee the career of persecution whereon he was entering at his own expense and of his own motion. He produced five shillings: "If you absolutely haven't the money, why — take this and get a bottle — good: not at a public-house. But mind, *at once*. He should have had it before."

It would have interested him, as a matter of coincidence, to know that his principal had been guilty of the selfsame indiscretion — even the amount was identical — on that landing the day before. But, as Mrs. Curtis said nothing of this, he floundered down the stair and out



## THE SHORT STORY

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into the wetter mud, pondering whether or not the beloved son of a Congregational minister might take full credit for a deed of charity on the proceeds of sixpenny nap. But Mrs. Curtis puffed her wrinkles, and shook her head sagaciously as she carried in her candle. From the room came a clink as of money falling into a teapot. And Mrs. Manders went about her business.

The door was shut, and the stair a pit of blackness. Twice a lodger passed down, and up and down, and still it did not open. Men and women walked on the lower flights, and out at the door, and in again. From the street a shout or a snatch of laughter floated up the pit. On the pavement footsteps rang crisper and fewer, and from the bottom passage there were sounds of stagger and sprawl. A demented old clock buzzed divers hours at random, and was rebuked every twenty minutes by the regular tread of a policeman on his beat. Finally, somebody shut the street-door with a great bang, and the street was muffled. A key turned inside the door on the landing, but that was all. A feeble light shone for hours along the crack below, and then went out. The crazy old clock went buzzing on, but nothing left that room all night. Nothing that opened the door. . . .

When next the key turned, it was to Mrs. Manders' knock, in the full morning; and soon the two women came out on the landing together, Mrs. Curtis with a shapeless clump of bonnet. "Ah, 'e's a lovely corpse," said Mrs. Manders. "Like wax. So was my 'usband."

"I must be stirrin'," croaked the old woman, "an' go about the insurance an' the measurin' an' that. There's lots to do."

"Ah, there is. 'Oo are you goin' to 'ave — Wilkins?



## ON THE STAIRS

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I 'ad Wilkins. Better than Kedge, I think: Kedge's mutes dresses rusty, an' their trousis is frayed. If you was thinkin' of 'avin' mutes —"

"Yus, yus," — with a palsied nodding — "I'm a-goin' to 'ave mutes: I can do it respectable, thank Gawd!"

"And the plooms?"

"Ay, yus, an' the plooms too. They ain't sich a great expense, after all."

## THE HOUSE OPPOSITE \*

By Anthony Hope

Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863- ) is a London lawyer, educated at Oxford. A few years ago he became suddenly famous as the author of the romantic popular novels, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *Rupert of Hentzau*. *The House Opposite* is from the volume of stories entitled *The Dolly Dialogues*.

We were talking over the sad case of young Algy Groom; I was explaining to Mrs. Hilary exactly what had happened.

"His father gave him," said I, "a hundred pounds, to keep him for three months in Paris while he learnt French."

"And very liberal too," said Mrs. Hilary.

"It depends where you dine," said I. "However, that question did not arise, for Algy went to the Grand Prix the day after he arrived —"

"A horse-race?" asked Mrs. Hilary, with great contempt.

"Certainly, the competitors are horses," I rejoined. "And there he, most unfortunately, lost the whole sum, without learning any French to speak of."

"How disgusting!" exclaimed Mrs. Hilary, and little Miss Phyllis gasped in horror.

"Oh, well," said Hilary, with much bravery (as it struck me), "his father's very well off."

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## THE HOUSE OPPOSITE

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"That doesn't make it a bit better," declared his wife.

"There's no mortal sin in a little betting, my dear. Boys will be boys —"

"And even that," I interposed, "wouldn't matter if we could only prevent girls from being girls."

Mrs. Hilary, taking no notice whatever of me, pronounced sentence. "He grossly deceived his father," she said, and took up her embroidery.

"Most of us have grossly deceived our parents before now," said I. "We should all have to confess to something of the sort."

"I hope you're speaking for your own sex," observed Mrs. Hilary.

"Not more than yours," said I. "You used to meet Hilary on the pier when your father wasn't there — you told me so."

"Father had authorized my acquaintance with Hilary."

"I hate quibbles," said I.

There was a pause. Mrs. Hilary stitched: Hilary observed that the day was fine.

"Now," I pursued carelessly, "even Miss Phyllis here has been known to deceive her parents."

"Oh, let the poor child alone, anyhow," said Mrs. Hilary.

"Haven't you?" said I to Miss Phyllis.

I expected an indignant denial. So did Mrs. Hilary, for she remarked with a sympathetic air:

"Never mind his folly, Phyllis dear."

"Haven't you, Miss Phyllis?" said I.

Miss Phyllis grew very red. Fearing that I was causing her pain, I was about to observe on the prospects

## THE SHORT STORY

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of a Dissolution when a shy smile spread over Miss Phyllis' face.

"Yes, once," said she, with a timid glance at Mrs. Hilary, who immediately laid down her embroidery.

"Out with it!" I cried triumphantly. "Come along, Miss Phyllis. We won't tell, honor bright!"

Miss Phyllis looked again at Mrs. Hilary. Mrs. Hilary is human.

"Well, Phyllis dear," said she, "after all this time I shouldn't think it my duty —"

"It only happened last summer," said Miss Phyllis.

Mrs. Hilary looked rather put out.

"Still," she began.

"We must have the story," said I.

Little Miss Phyllis put down the sock she had been knitting.

"I was very naughty," she remarked. "It was my last term at school."

"I know that age," said I to Hilary.

"My window looked out toward the street. You're sure you won't tell? Well, there was a house opposite —"

"And a young man in it," said I.

"How did you know that?" asked Miss Phyllis, blushing immensely.

"No girls' school can keep up its numbers without one," I explained.

"Well, there was, anyhow," said Miss Phyllis. "And I and two other girls went to a course of lectures at the Town Hall on literature or something of that kind. We used to have a shilling given us for our tickets."

"Precisely," said I. "A hundred pounds!"

## THE HOUSE OPPOSITE

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"No, a shilling," corrected Miss Phyllis. "A hundred pounds! How absurd, Mr. Carter! Well, one day I — I —"

"You're sure you wish to go on, Phyllis?" asked Mrs. Hilary.

"You're afraid, Mrs. Hilary," said I, severely.

"Nonsense, Mr. Carter. I thought Phyllis might —"

"I don't mind going on," said Miss Phyllis, smiling.

"One day I — I lost the other girls."

"The other girls are always easy to lose," I observed.

"And on the way there — oh, you know, he went to the lectures."

"The young dog," said I, nudging Hilary. "I should think he did!"

"On the way there it became rather — rather foggy."

"Blessings on it!" I cried; for little Miss Phyllis' demure but roguish expression delighted me.

"And he — he found me in the fog."

"What are you doing, Mr. Carter?" cried Mrs. Hilary, angrily.

"Nothing, nothing," said I. I believe I had winked at Hilary.

"And — and we couldn't find the Town Hall."

"Oh, Phyllis!" groaned Mrs. Hilary.

Little Miss Phyllis looked alarmed for a moment. Then she smiled.

"But we found the confectioner's," said she.

"The Grand Prix," said I, pointing my forefinger at Hilary.

"He had no money at all," said Miss Phyllis.

"It's ideal!" said I.

"And — and we had tea on — on —"



## THE SHORT STORY

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"The shilling?" I cried in rapture.

"Yes," said little Miss Phyllis, "on the shilling. And he saw me home."

"Details, please," said I.

Little Miss Phyllis shook her head.

"And left me at the door."

"Was it still foggy?" I asked.

"Yes. Or he wouldn't have —"

"Now what did he —?"

"Come to the door, Mr. Carter," said Miss Phyllis, with obvious wariness. "Oh, it was such fun!"

"I'm sure it was."

"No, I mean when we were examined in the lectures. I bought the local paper, you know, and read it up, and I got top marks easily, and Miss Green wrote to mother to say how well I had done."

"It all ends most satisfactorily," I observed.

"Yes, didn't it?" said little Miss Phyllis.

Mrs. Hilary was grave again.

"And you never told your mother, Phyllis!" she asked.

"N-no, Cousin Mary," said Miss Phyllis.

I rose and stood with my back to the fire. Little Miss Phyllis took up her sock again, but a smile still played about the corners of her mouth.

"I wonder," said I, looking up at the ceiling, "what happened at the door." Then, as no one spoke, I added:

"Pooh! I know what happened at the door."

"I'm not going to tell you anything more," said Miss Phyllis.

"But I should like to hear it in your own —"

## THE HOUSE OPPOSITE

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Miss Phyllis was gone! She had suddenly risen and run from the room.

"It did happen at the door," said I.

"Fancy Phyllis!" mused Mrs. Hilary.

"I hope," said I, "that it will be a lesson to you."

"I shall have to keep my eye on her," said Mrs. Hilary.

"You can't do it," said I, in easy confidence. I had no fear of little Miss Phyllis being done out of her recreations. "Meanwhile," I pursued, "the important thing is this: my parallel is obvious and complete."

"There's not the least likeness," said Mrs. Hilary, sharply.

"As a hundred pounds are to a shilling, so is the Grand Prix to the young man opposite," I observed, taking my hat, and holding out my hand to Mrs. Hilary.

"I am very angry with you," she said. "You've made the child think there was nothing wrong in it."

"Oh! nonsense," said I. "Look how she enjoyed telling it."

Then, not heeding Mrs. Hilary, I launched into an apostrophe.

"O Divine House Opposite!" I cried. "Charming House Opposite! What is a man's own dull uneventful home compared with that Glorious House Opposite! If only I might dwell forever in the House Opposite!"

"I haven't the least notion what you mean," remarked Mrs. Hilary, stiffly. "I suppose it's something silly — or worse."

I looked at her in some puzzle.

"Have you no longing for the House Opposite?" I asked.

## THE SHORT STORY

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Mrs. Hilary looked at me. Her eyes ceased to be absolutely blank. She put her arm through Hilary's and answered gently:

"I don't want the House Opposite."

"Ah," said I, giving my hat a brush, "but maybe you remember the House — when it was Opposite?"

Mrs. Hilary, one arm still in Hilary's gave me her hand.

She blushed and smiled.

"Well," said she, "it was your fault: so I won't scold Phyllis."

"No, don't, my dear," said Hilary, with a laugh.

As for me, I went down-stairs, and, in absence of mind, bade my cabman drive to the House Opposite. But I have never got there.

### STUDY NOTE

This is a story in the light, airy vein of *The Dolly Dialogues* and yet one characterized by a meaning, a theme, which makes it well worth while.

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND \*

By A. Conan Doyle

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859- ) is a Scotch physician, born in Edinburgh. He was educated in Edinburgh University both in the arts and in medicine. His university also gave him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. He was knighted in 1902. He began active life as a practicing physician, but after a few years devoted much of his time to writing fiction. His travels have been extensive and his interest in public affairs wide. The Boer War drew him to South Africa.

Dr. Doyle began his literary work in 1887 with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. His reputation as a literary man is largely due, however, to the application of literary methods to the detective story in the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891). A second volume, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, followed in 1893. Of his thirty or more novels, collections of stories, and plays a few of the best known are: *Micah Clarke* (1888), *The Sign of the Four* (1889), *The White Company* (1890), *Uncle Bernac* (1897), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1904). *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, which follows, is one of the stories from the last named volume.

In glancing over my notes of the seventy-odd cases in which I have, during the last eight years, studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which

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## THE SHORT STORY

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did not tend toward the unusual, and even the fantastic. Of all these varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Royslotts of Stoke Moran. The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors in Baker Street. It is possible that I might have placed them upon record before, but a promise of secrecy was made at the time, from which I have only been freed during the last month by the untimely death of the lady to whom the pledge was given. It is perhaps as well that the facts should now come to light, for I have reasons to know that there are wide-spread rumors as to the death of Dr. Grimesby Royslott which tend to make the matter even more terrible than the truth.

It was early in April in the year '83 that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser as a rule, and as the clock on the mantel-piece showed me that it was only a quarter past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

"Very sorry to knock you up, Watson," said he, "but it's the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up; she retorted upon me; and I on you."

"What is it, then — a fire?"

"No; a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the metropolis at this



## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought, at any rate, that I should call you and give you the chance."

"My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything."

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis, with which he unraveled the problems which were submitted to him. I rapidly threw on my clothes, and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room. A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

"Good-morning, madam," said Holmes, cheerily.

"My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha!—I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering."

"It is not cold which makes me shiver," said the woman, in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

"What then?"

"It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror." She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and gray, with restless, frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with pre-

## THE SHORT STORY

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mature gray, and her expression was weary and haggard. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

"You must not fear," said he, soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

"You know me, then?"

"No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads, before you reached the station."

The lady gave a violent start, and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madam," said he, smiling.

"The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver."

"Whatever your reasons may be, you are perfectly correct," said she. "I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead at twenty past, and came in by the first train to Waterloo. Sir, I can stand this strain no longer; I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to — none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her that I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think that you could help me, too, and at least throw a

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or six weeks I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful."

Holmes turned to his desk, and unlocking it, drew out a small case-book, which he consulted.

"Farintosh," said he. "Ah, yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson. I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its own reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter."

"Alas!" replied our visitor, "the very horror of my situation lies in the fact that my fears are so vague, and my suspicions depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another, that even he, to whom of all others I have a right to look for help and advice, looks upon all that I tell him about it as the fancies of a nervous woman. He does not say so, but I can read it from his soothing answers and averted eyes. But I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me."

"I am all attention, madam."

"My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living with my step-father, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest

## THE SHORT STORY

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Saxon families in England, the Royslotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey."

Holmes nodded his head. "The name is familiar to me," said he.

"The family was at one time among the richest in England, and the estates extended over the borders into Berkshire in the north, and Hampshire in the west. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler in the days of the Regency. Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the horrible life of an artistocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree, and went out to Calcutta, where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death, and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he suffered a long term of imprisonment, and afterward returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

"When Dr. Royslott was in India he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner, the young widow of Major-General Stoner, of the Bengal Artillery. My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother's remarriage. She had a considerable sum of money — not less than 1,000 pounds a year —



## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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and this she bequeathed to Dr. Roylott entirely while we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage. Shortly after our return to England my mother died — she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident near Crewe. Dr. Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice in London, and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed to be no obstacle to our happiness.

“ But a terrible change came over our step-father about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbors, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house, and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my step-father’s case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

“ Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet into a stream ; and it was only by paying over all the money which I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gypsies, and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bram-



## THE SHORT STORY

---

ble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds, and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

“ You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has.”

“ Your sister is dead, then? ”

“ She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see anyone of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother’s maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail, who lives near Harrow, and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady’s house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay major of marines, to whom she became engaged. My step-father learned of the engagement when my sister returned, and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion.”

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed and his head sunk in a cushion, but

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

---

he half opened his lids now and glanced at his visitor.

“Pray be precise as to details,” said he.

“It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor-house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor, the sitting-rooms being in the central block of the buildings. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr. Roylott’s, the second my sister’s, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Do I make myself plain?”

“Perfectly so.”

“The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o’clock she rose to leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

“‘Tell me, Helen,’ said she, ‘have you ever heard any one whistle in the dead of the night?’

“‘Never,’ said I.

“‘I suppose that you could not possibly whistle, yourself, in your sleep?’

“‘Certainly not. But why?’

“‘Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low, clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from — perhaps from the next room,

## THE SHORT STORY

---

perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it.'

" 'No, I have not. It must be those wretched gypsies in the plantation.'

" 'Very likely. And yet if it were on the lawn, I wonder that you did not hear it also.'

" 'Ah, but I sleep more heavily than you.'

" 'Well, it is of no great consequence, at any rate.' She smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock."

" 'Indeed,' said Holmes. 'Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?'"

" 'Always.'"

" 'And why?'"

" 'I think that I mentioned to you that the doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were locked.'"

" 'Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement.'"

" 'I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amid all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage my sis-

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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ter's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor-lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognized me, but as I bent over her, she suddenly shrieked out, in a voice which I shall never forget: 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my step-father, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister."

"One moment," said Holmes; "are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?"

"That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet, among the crash of the gale and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived."



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ Was your sister dressed? ”

“ No, she was in her night-dress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a match-box.”

“ Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to? ”

“ He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott’s conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her.”

“ How about poison? ”

“ The doctors examined her for it, but without success.”

“ What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then? ”

“ It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine.”

“ Were there gypsies in the plantation at the time? ”

“ Yes, there are nearly always some there.”

“ Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band — a speckled band? ”



## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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“ Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of people, perhaps to these very gypsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used.”

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

“ These are very deep waters,” said he; “ pray go on with your narrative.”

“ Two years have passed since then, and my life had been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honor to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage — Percy Armitage — the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading. My step-father has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept.

Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the ‘ Crown Inn,’ which is opposite,

## THE SHORT STORY

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and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice."

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

"Yes, all."

"Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your step-father."

"Why, what do you mean?"

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady colored deeply and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

"This is a very deep business," he said, at last. "There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran today, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your step-father?"

"As it happens, he spoke of coming into town today upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way."

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

---

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

"Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?"

"I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming."

"And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?"

"No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon." She dropped her thick black veil over her face and glided from the room.

"And what do you think of it all, Watson?" asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

"It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business."

"Dark enough and sinister enough."

"Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end."

"What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?"

"I cannot think."

"When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gypsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe the doctor has an interest in preventing his

## THE SHORT STORY

---

step-daughter's marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and, finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars which secured the shutters falling back into its place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines."

"But what, then, did the gypsies do?"

"I cannot imagine."

"I see many objections to any such theory."

"And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what in the name of the devil!"

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross-bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

"Which of you is Holmes?" asked this apparition.

"My name, sir; but you have the advantage of me," said my companion, quietly.

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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"I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran."

"Indeed, doctor," said Holmes, blandly. "Pray take a seat."

"I will do nothing of the kind. My step-daughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?"

"It is a little cold for the time of the year," said Holmes.

"What has she been saying to you?" screamed the old man, furiously.

"But I have heard that the crocuses promise well," continued my companion, imperturbably.

"Ha! You put me off, do you?" said our new visitor, taking a step forward and shaking his hunting-crop. "I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes, the meddler."

My friend smiled.

"Holmes, the busybody!"

His smile broadened.

"Holmes, the Scotland-yard Jack-in-office!"

Holmes chuckled heartily. "Your conversation is most entertaining," said he. "When you go out, close the door, for there is a decided draught."

"I will go when I have said my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here. I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here." He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

"See that you keep yourself out of my grip," he snarled; and hurling the twisted poker into the fireplace, he strode out of the room.



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ He seems a very amiable person,” said Holmes, laughing. “ I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own.” As he spoke he picked up the steel poker, and with a sudden effort straightened it out again.

“ Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterward I shall walk down to Doctors’ Commons, where I hope to get some data which may help us in this matter.”

It was nearly one o’clock when Sherlock Holmes returned from his excursion. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, scrawled over with notes and figures.

“ I have seen the will of the deceased wife,” said he. “ To determine its exact meaning I have been obliged to work out the present prices of the investments with which it is concerned. The total income, which at the time of the wife’s death was little short of 1,100 pounds, is now, through the fall in agricultural prices, not more than 750 pounds. Each daughter can claim an income of 250 pounds, in case of marriage. It is evident, therefore, that if both girls had married, this beauty would have had a mere pittance, while even one of them would cripple him to a very serious extent. My morning’s work has not been wasted, since it has proved that he had the very strongest motives for standing in the way of anything of the sort. And now, Watson, this is too serious for dawdling, especially as the old man is aware that we

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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are interesting ourselves in his affairs; so if you are ready, we shall call a cab and drive to Waterloo. I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket. An Eley's No. 2 is an excellent argument with gentlemen who can twist steel pokers into knots. That and a tooth-brush are, I think, all that we need."

At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap at the station inn, and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth. To me at least there was a strange contrast between the sweet promise of the spring and this sinister quest upon which we were engaged. My companion sat in front of the trap, his arms folded, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his chin sunk upon his breast, buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly, however, he started, tapped me on the shoulder, and pointed over the meadows.

"Look there!" said he.

A heavily timbered park stretched up in a gentle slope, thickening into a grove at the highest point. From amid the branches there jutted out the gray gables and high roof-tree of a very old mansion.

"Stoke Moran?" said he.

"Yes, sir, that be the house of Dr. Grimesby Roylott," remarked the driver.

"There is some building going on there," said Holmes; "that is where we are going."

## THE SHORT STORY

---

"There's the village," said the driver, pointing to a cluster of roofs some distance to the left; "but if you want to get to the house, you'll find it shorter to get over this stile, and so by the foot-path over the fields. There it is, where the lady is walking."

"And the lady, I fancy, is Miss Stoner," observed Holmes, shading his eyes. "Yes, I think we had better do as you suggest."

We got off, paid our fare, and the trap rattled back on its way to Leatherhead.

"I thought it as well," said Holmes, as we climbed the stile, "that this fellow should think we had come here as architects or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good-afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word."

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you!" she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. "All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening."

"We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance," said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "he has followed me, then."

"So it appears."

"He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?"

"He must guard himself, for he may find that there is some one more cunning than himself upon his track."

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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You must lock yourself up from him tonight. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine."

The building was of gray, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion, and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken, and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected against the end wall, and the stone-work had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn, and examined with deep attention the outsides of the windows.

"This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the center one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott's chamber?"

"Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one."

"Pending the alterations, as I understand. By-the-way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall."

"There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room."

"Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of



## THE SHORT STORY

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this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There are windows in it, of course? "

" Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for any one to pass through."

" As you both locked your doors at night, your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room and bar your shutters."

Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavored in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. " Hum! " said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity; " my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."

A small side door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister had met with her fate. It was a homely little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country-houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-counterpaned bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-hand side of the window. These articles, with two small wickerwork chairs, made up all the furniture in the room, save for a square of Wilton carpet in the center. The boards round and the paneling of



## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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the walls were of brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discolored that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes traveled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.

"Where does that bell communicate with?" he asked, at last, pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.

"It goes to the housekeeper's room."

"It looks newer than the other things?"

"Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."

"Your sister asked for it, I suppose?"

"No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."

"Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor." He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand, and crawled swiftly backward and forward, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the wood-work with which the chamber was paneled. Finally he walked over to the bed, and spent some time in staring at it, and in running his eye up and down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.

"Why, it's a dummy," said he.

"Won't it ring?"

"No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening for the ventilator is."

## THE SHORT STORY

---

“ How very absurd! I never noticed that before.”

“ Very strange!” muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. “ There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!”

“ That is also quite modern,” said the lady.

“ Done about the same time as the bell-rope?” remarked Holmes.

“ Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time.”

“ They seem to have been of a most interesting character — dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment.”

Dr. Grimesby Roylott’s chamber was larger than that of his step-daughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp-bed, a small wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an arm-chair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye.

Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.

“ What’s in here?” he asked, tapping the safe.

“ My step-father’s business papers.”

“ Oh, you have seen inside, then?”

“ Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers.”

“ There isn’t a cat in it, for example?”

“ No. What a strange idea!”

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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“ Well, look at this! ” He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.

“ No; we don’t keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon.”

“ Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer of milk does not go very far in satisfying its wants, I dare say. There is one point which I should wish to determine.” He squatted down in front of the wooden chair, and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.

“ Thank you. That is quite settled,” said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. “ Hello! — Here is something interesting! ”

The object which had caught his eye was a small dog-lash hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself, and tied so as to make a loop of whip-cord.

“ What do you make of that, Watson? ”

“ It’s a common enough lash. But I don’t know why it should be tied.”

“ That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it’s a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and with your permission we shall walk out upon the lawn.”

I had never seen my friend’s face so grim or his brow so dark as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.

“ It is very essential, Miss Stoner,” said he, “ that

## THE SHORT STORY

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you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect."

"I shall most certainly do so."

"The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance."

"I assure you that I am in your hands."

"In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room."

Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.

"Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?"

"Yes, that is the 'Crown.'"

"Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?"

"Certainly."

"You must confine yourself to your room, on pretense of a headache, when your step-father comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp, put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw quietly with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night."

"Oh, yes, easily."

"The rest you will leave in our hands."

"But what will you do?"

"We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you."

"I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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up your mind," said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.

"Perhaps I have."

"Then, for pity's sake, tell me what was the cause of my sister's death."

"I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak."

"You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright."

"No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you, for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be in vain. Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you."

Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the "Crown Inn." They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor-House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the doctor's voice, and saw the fury with which he shook his clenched fists at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

"Do you know, Watson," said Holmes, as we sat together in the gathering darkness, "I have really some



## THE SHORT STORY

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scruples as to taking you tonight. There is a distinct element of danger."

"Can I be of assistance?"

"Your presence might be invaluable."

"Then I shall certainly come."

"It is very kind of you."

"You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me."

"No, but I fancy that I may have deduced a little more. I imagine that you saw all that I did."

"I saw nothing remarkable save the bell-rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine."

"You saw the ventilator, too?"

"Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through."

"I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran."

"My dear Holmes!"

"Oh, yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott's cigar. Now, of course, that suggested at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the coroner's inquiry. I deduced a ventilator."

"But what harm can there be in that?"

"Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?"

"I cannot as yet see any connection."

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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“ Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed? ”

“ No. ”

“ It was clamped to the floor. Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before? ”

“ I cannot say that I have. ”

“ The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope — for so we may call it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-pull. ”

“ Holmes, ” I cried, “ I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at! We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime. ”

“ Subtle enough and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong, he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession. This man strikes even deeper; but I think, Watson, that we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness' sake let us have a quiet pipe, and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful. ”

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor-House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out in front of us.

“ That is our signal, ” said Holmes, springing to his feet; “ it comes from the middle window. ”

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explaining that we were going on a late visit to

## THE SHORT STORY

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an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night there. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall. Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window, when out from a clump of laurel-bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself upon the grass with writhing limbs, and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

“My God!” I whispered; “did you see it?”

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vise upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh, and put his lips to my ear.

“It is a nice household,” he murmured. “That is the baboon.”

I had forgotten the strange pets which the doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes’ example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp onto the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the daytime. Then creeping up to me and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words:

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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“ The least sound would be fatal to our plans.”

I nodded to show that I had heard.

“ We must sit without light. He would see it through the ventilator.”

I nodded again.

“ Do not go asleep ; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair.”

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

Holmes had brought up a long, thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed beside him. By it he laid the box of matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and we were left in darkness.

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, not even the drawing of a breath, and yet I knew that my companion sat open-eyed, within a few feet of me, in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters cut off the least ray of light, and we waited in absolute darkness. From outside came the occasional cry of a night-bird, and once at our very window a long-drawn, cat-like whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one and two and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall.

Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Some one in the next room had

## THE SHORT STORY

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lit a dark-lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible — a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a kettle. The instant that we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

“ You see it, Watson? ” he yelled. “ You see it? ”

But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale, and filled with horror and loathing.

He had ceased to strike, and was gazing up at the ventilator, when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

“ What can it mean? ” I gasped.

“ It means that it is all over,” Holmes answered. “ And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we will enter Dr. Roylott’s room.”

With a grave face he lit the lamp and led the way



## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.

It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark-lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott, clad in a long gray dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upward and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful, rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

"The band! the speckled band!" whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange head-gear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.

"It is a swamp adder!" cried Holmes; "the deadliest snake in India. He has died within ten seconds of being bitten. Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another. Let us thrust this creature back into its den, and we can then remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter, and let the county police know what has happened."

As he spoke he drew the dog-whip swiftly from the

## THE SHORT STORY

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dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck, he drew it from its horrid perch, and carrying it at arm's-length, threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it.

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran. It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length, by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we traveled back next day.

"I had," said he, "come to an entirely erroneous conclusion, which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gypsies, and the use of the word 'band,' which was used by the poor girl, no doubt to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell-rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the sus-

## ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

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picion that the rope was there as bridge for something passing through the hole and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed corner, indeed, who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned. He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope and land on the bed. It might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

“ I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in the habit of standing on it, which of course would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whip-cord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by

## THE SHORT STORY

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her step-father hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss, as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it."

"With the result of driving it through the ventilator."

"And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home, and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience."

## WILL O' THE MILL \*

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1850-1894) was one of few masters of English prose of recent times. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, the son of Robert Stevenson, a noted civil engineer. He was educated for the law in Edinburgh University, but intended from the beginning to be a literary man. His literary work consists of novels, stories, lyric poems, essays, travels, and letters. His chief novels are *Treasure Island* (1883), *Prince Otto* (1885), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *The Black Arrow* (1888), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), *The Wrecker* (1891-92), *David Balfour* (1893), *The Ebb Tide* (1894), *St. Ives* (unfinished but completed by A. T. Quiller-Couch in 1897), and *Weir of Hermiston* (unfinished).

### I

#### THE PLAIN AND THE STARS

The Mill where Will lived with his adopted parents stood in a falling valley between pinewoods and great mountains. Above, hill after hill soared upwards until they soared out of the depth of the hardest timber, and stood naked against the sky. Some way up, a long gray village lay like a seam or a rag of vapor on a wooded hillside; and when the wind was favorable, the sound of the church bells would drop down, thin and silvery, to Will. Below, the valley grew ever steeper and steeper,

\* Reprinted from the Biographical Edition of the *Complete Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, with the consent of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.



## THE SHORT STORY

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and at the same time widened out on either hand; and from an eminence beside the mill it was possible to see its whole length and away beyond it over a wide plain, where the river turned and shone, and moved on from city to city on its voyage towards the sea. It chanced that over this valley there lay a pass into a neighboring kingdom; so that, quiet and rural as it was, the road that ran along beside the river was a high thoroughfare between two splendid and powerful societies. All through the summer, traveling-carriages came crawling up, or went plunging briskly downwards past the mill; and as it happened that the other side was very much easier of ascent, the path was not much frequented, except by people going in one direction; and of all the carriages that Will saw go by, five-sixths were plunging briskly downwards and only one-sixth crawling up. Much more was this the case with foot-passengers. All the light-footed tourists, all the peddlers laden with strange wares, were tending downward like the river that accompanied their path. Nor was this all; for when Will was yet a child a disastrous war arose over a great part of the world. The newspapers were full of defeats and victories, the earth rang with cavalry hoofs, and often for days together and for miles around the coil of battle terrified good people from their labors in the field. Of all this, nothing was heard for a long time in the valley; but at last one of the commanders pushed an army over the pass by forced marches, and for three days horse and foot, cannon and tumbril, drum and standard, kept pouring downward past the mill. All day the child stood and watched them on their passage — the rhythmical stride, the pale, unshaven faces

## WILL O' THE MILL

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tanned about the eyes, the discolored regimentals and the tattered flags, filled him with a sense of weariness, pity, and wonder; and all night long, after he was in bed, he could hear the cannon pounding and the feet trampling, and the great armament sweeping onward and downward past the mill. No one in the valley ever heard the fate of the expedition, for they lay out of the way of gossip in those troublous times; but Will saw one thing plainly, that not a man returned. Whither had they all gone? Whither went all the tourists and peddlers with strange wares? whither all the brisk barouches with servant in the dicky? whither the water of the stream, ever coursing downward and ever renewed from above? Even the wind blew oftener down the valley, and carried the dead leaves along with it in the fall. It seemed like a great conspiracy of things animate and inanimate; they all went downward, fleetly and gaily downward, and only he, it seemed, remained behind, like a stock upon the wayside. It sometimes made him glad when he noticed how the fishes kept their heads up stream. They, at least, stood faithfully by him, while all else were posting downward to the unknown world.

One evening he asked the miller where the river went.

“It goes down the valley,” answered he, “and turns a power of mills — six score mills, they say, from here to Unterdeck — and is none the wearier after all. And then it goes out into the lowlands, and waters the great corn country, and runs through a sight of fine cities (so they say) where kings live all alone in great palaces, with a sentry walking up and down before the door. And it goes under bridges with stone men upon them,

## THE SHORT STORY

---

looking down and smiling so curious at the water, and living folks leaning their elbows on the wall and looking over, too. And then it goes on and on, and down through marshes and sands, until at last it falls into the sea, where the ships are that bring parrots and tobacco from the Indies. Ay, it has a long trot before it as it goes singing over our weir, bless its heart! ”

“ And what is the sea? ” asked Will.

“ The sea! ” cried the miller. “ Lord help us all, it is the greatest thing God made! That is where all the water in the world runs down into a great salt lake. There it lies, as flat as my hand and as innocent-like as a child; but they do say when the wind blows it gets up into water-mountains bigger than any of ours, and swallows down great ships bigger than our mill, and makes such a roaring that you can hear it miles away upon the land. There are great fish in it five times bigger than a bull, and one old serpent as long as our river and as old as all the world, with whiskers like a man, and a crown of silver on her head.”

Will thought he had never heard anything like this, and he kept on asking question after question about the world that lay away down the river, with all its perils and marvels, until the old miller became quite interested himself, and at last took him by the hand and led him to the hilltop that overlooks the valley and the plain. The sun was near setting, and hung low down in a cloudless sky. Everything was defined and glorified in golden light. Will had never seen so great an expanse of country in his life; he stood and gazed with all his eyes. He could see the cities, and the woods and fields, and the bright curves of the river, and far away to

## WILL O' THE MILL

---

where the rim of the plain trenched along the shining heavens. An over-mastering emotion seized upon the boy, soul and body; his heart beat so thickly that he could not breathe; the scene swam before his eyes; the sun seemed to wheel round and round, and throw off, as it turned, strange shapes which disappeared with the rapidity of thought, and were succeeded by others. Will covered his face with his hands, and burst into a violent fit of tears; and the poor miller, sadly disappointed and perplexed, saw nothing better for it than to take him up in his arms and carry him home in silence.

From that day forward Will was full of new hopes and longings. Something kept tugging at his heart-strings; the running water carried his desires along with it as he dreamed over its fleeting surface; the wind, as it ran over innumerable tree-tops, hailed him with encouraging words; branches beckoned downward; the open road, as it shouldered round the angles and went turning and vanishing fast and faster down the valley, tortured him with its solicitations. He spent long whiles on the eminence, looking down the rivershed and abroad on the flat lowlands, and watched the clouds that traveled forth upon the sluggish wind and trailed their purple shadows on the plain; or he would linger by the wayside, and follow the carriages with his eyes as they rattled downward by the river. It did not matter what it was; everything that went that way, were it cloud or carriage, bird or brown water in the stream, he felt his heart flow out after it in an ecstasy of longing.

We are told by men of science that all the ventures of mariners on the sea, all that counter-marching of tribes and races that confounds old history with its dust



## THE SHORT STORY

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and rumor, sprang from nothing more abstruse than the laws of supply and demand, and a certain natural instinct for cheap rations. To anyone thinking deeply this will seem a dull and pitiful explanation. The tribes that came swarming out of the North and East, if they were indeed pressed onward from behind by others, were drawn at the same time by the magnetic influence of the South and West. The fame of other lands had reached them; the name of the eternal city rang in their ears; they were not colonists, but pilgrims; they traveled towards wine and gold and sunshine, but their hearts were set on something higher. That divine unrest, that old stinging trouble of humanity that makes all high achievements and all miserable failure, the same that spread wings with Icarus, the same that sent Columbus into the desolate Atlantic, inspired and supported these barbarians on their perilous march. There is one legend which profoundly represents their spirit, of how a flying party of these wanderers encountered a very old man shod with iron. The old man asked them whither they were going; and they answered with one voice: "To the Eternal City!" He looked upon them gravely. "I have sought it," he said, "over the most part of the world. Three such pairs as I now carry on my feet have I worn out upon this pilgrimage, and now the fourth is growing slender underneath my steps. And all this while I have not found the city." And he turned and went his own way alone, leaving them astonished.

And yet this would scarcely parallel the intensity of Will's feeling for the plain. If he could only go far enough out there, he felt as if his eyesight would be



## WILL O' THE MILL

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purged and clarified, as if his hearing would grow more delicate, and his very breath would come and go with luxury. He was transplanted and withering where he was; he lay in a strange country and was sick for home. Bit by bit, he pieced together broken notions of the world below: of the river, ever moving and growing until it sailed forth into the majestic ocean; of the cities, full of brisk and beautiful people, playing fountains, bands of music and marble palaces, and lighted up at night from end to end with artificial stars of gold; of the great churches, wise universities, brave armies, and untold money lying stored in vaults; of the high-flying vice that moved in the sunshine, and the stealth and swiftness of midnight murder. I have said he was sick as if for home: the figure halts. He was like someone lying in twilit, formless pre-existence, and stretching out his hands lovingly towards many-colored, many-sounding life. It was no wonder he was unhappy, he would go and tell the fish: they were made for their life, wished for no more than worms and running water, and a hole below a falling bank; but he was differently designed, full of desires and aspirations, itching at the fingers, lusting with the eyes, whom the whole variegated world could not satisfy with aspects. The true life, the true bright sunshine, lay far out upon the plain. And O! to see this sunlight once before he died! to move with a jocund spirit in a golden land! to hear the trained singers and sweet church bells, and see the holiday gardens! "And O fish!" he would cry, "if you would only turn your noses down stream, you could swim so easily into the fabled waters and see the vast ships passing over your heads like clouds, and hear the great

## THE SHORT STORY

---

water-hills making music over you all day long!" But the fish kept looking patiently in their own direction, until Will hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

Hitherto the traffic on the road had passed by Will, like something seen in a picture; he had perhaps exchanged salutations with a tourist, or caught sight of an old gentleman in a traveling cap at a carriage window; but for the most part it had been a mere symbol, which he contemplated from apart and with something of a superstitious feeling. A time came at last when this was to be changed. The miller, who was a greedy man in his way, and never forewent an opportunity of honest profit, turned the mill-house into a little wayside inn, and, several pieces of good fortune falling in opportunely, built stables and got the position of postmaster on the road. It now became Will's duty to wait upon people, as they sat to break their fasts in the little arbor at the top of the mill garden; and you may be sure that he kept his ears open, and learned many new things about the outside world as he brought the omelette or the wine. Nay, he would often get into conversation with single guests, and by adroit questions and polite attention, not only gratify his own curiosity, but win the goodwill of the travelers. Many complimented the old couple on their serving-boy; and a professor was eager to take him away with him, and have him properly educated in the plain. The miller and his wife were mightily astonished and even more pleased. They thought it a very good thing that they should have opened their inn. "You see," the old man would remark, "he has a kind of talent for a publican; he never would have made anything else!" And so life wagged on in the valley, with

## WILL O' THE MILL

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high satisfaction to all concerned but Will. Every carriage that left the inn door seemed to take a part of him away with it; and when people jestingly offered him a lift, he could with difficulty command his emotion. Night after night he would dream that he was awakened by flustered servants, and that a splendid equipage waited at the door to carry him down into the plain; night after night; until the dream, which had seemed all jollity to him at first, began to take on a color of gravity, and the nocturnal summons and waiting equipage occupied a place in his mind as something to be both feared and hoped for.

One day, when Will was about sixteen, a fat young man arrived at sunset to pass the night. He was a contented-looking fellow, with a jolly eye, and carried a knapsack. While dinner was preparing, he sat in the arbor to read a book; but as soon as he had begun to observe Will, the book was laid aside; he was plainly one of those who prefer living people to people made of ink and paper. Will, on his part, although he had not been much interested in the stranger at first sight, soon began to take a great deal of pleasure in his talk, which was full of good nature and good sense, and at last conceived a great respect for his character and wisdom.

They sat far into the night; and about two in the morning Will opened his heart to the young man, and told him how he longed to leave the valley and what bright hopes he had connected with the cities of the plain. The young man whistled, and then broke into a smile.

“My young friend,” he remarked, “you are a very curious little fellow, to be sure, and wish a great many

## THE SHORT STORY

---

things which you will never get. Why, you would feel quite ashamed if you knew how the little fellows in these fairy cities of yours are all after the same sort of nonsense, and keep breaking their hearts to get up into the mountains. And let me tell you, those who go down into the plains are a very short while there before they wish themselves heartily back again. The air is not so light, nor so pure; nor is the sun any brighter. As for the beautiful men and women, you would see many of them in rags and many of them deformed with horrible disorders; and a city is so hard a place for people who are poor and sensitive that many choose to die by their own hand."

"You must think me very simple," answered Will. "Although I have never been out of this valley, believe me, I have used my eyes. I know how one thing lives on another; for instance, how the fish hangs in the eddy to catch his fellows; and the shepherd, who makes so pretty a picture carrying home the lamb, is only carrying it home for dinner. I do not expect to find all things right in your cities. That is not what troubles me; it might have been that once upon a time; but although I live here always, I have asked many questions and learned a great deal in these last years, and certainly enough to cure me of my old fancies. But you would not have me die like a dog and not see all that is to be seen, and do all that a man can do, let it be good or evil? you would not have me spend all my days between this road here and the river, and not so much as make a motion to be up and live my life? — I would rather die out of hand," he cried, "than linger on as I am doing."



## WILL O' THE MILL

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"Thousands of people," said the young man, "live and die like you, and are none the less happy."

"Ah!" said Will, "if there are thousands who would like, why should not one of them have my place?"

It was quite dark; there was a hanging lamp in the arbor which lit up the table and the faces of the speakers; and along the arch, the leaves upon the trellis stood out illuminated against the night sky, a pattern of transparent green upon a dusky purple. The fat young man rose, and, taking Will by the arm, led him out under the open heavens.

"Did you ever look at the stars?" he asked, pointing upwards.

"Often and often," answered Will.

"And do you know what they are?"

"I have fancied many things."

"They are worlds like ours," said the young man.

"Some of them less; many of them a million times greater; and some of the least sparkles that you see are not only worlds, but whole clusters of worlds turning about each other in the midst of space. We do not know what there may be in any of them; perhaps the answer to all our difficulties or the cure of all our sufferings: and yet we can never reach them; not all the skill of the craftiest of men can fit out a ship for the nearest of these our neighbors, nor would the life of the most aged suffice for such a journey. When a great battle has been lost or a dear friend is dead, when we are hipped or in high spirits, there they are unweariedly shining overhead. We may stand down here a whole army of us together, and shout until we break our hearts, and not a whisper reaches them. We may climb the highest



## THE SHORT STORY

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mountain, and we are no nearer them. All we can do is to stand down here in the garden and take off our hats; the starshine lights upon our heads, and where mine is a little bald, I dare say you can see it glisten in the darkness. The mountain and the mouse. That is like to be all we shall ever have to do with Arcturus or Aldebaran. Can you apply a parable?" he added, laying his hand upon Will's shoulder. "It is not the same thing as a reason, but usually vastly more convincing."

Will hung his head a little, and then raised it once more to heaven. The stars seemed to expand and emit a sharper brilliancy; and as he kept turning his eyes higher and higher, they seemed to increase in multitude under his gaze.

"I see," he said, turning to the young man. "We are in a rat-trap."

"Something of that size. Did you ever see a squirrel turning in a cage? and another squirrel sitting philosophically over his nuts? I needn't ask you which of them looked more of a fool."

## II

### THE PARSON'S MARJORY

After some years the old people died, both in one winter, very carefully tended by their adopted son, and very quietly mourned when they were gone. People who had heard of his roving fancies supposed he would hasten to sell the property, and go down the river to push his fortunes. But there was never any sign of such an intention on the part of Will. On the contrary, he had the inn set on a better footing, and hired a couple of

## WILL O' THE MILL

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servants to assist him in carrying it on; and there he settled down, a kind, talkative, inscrutable young man, six feet three in his stockings, with an iron constitution and a friendly voice. He soon began to take rank in the district as a bit of an oddity: it was not much to be wondered at from the first, for he was always full of notions, and kept calling the plainest common-sense in question; but what most raised the report upon him was the odd circumstance of his courtship with the parson's Marjory.

The parson's Marjory was a lass about nineteen, when Will would be about thirty; well enough looking, and much better educated than any other girl in that part of the country, as became her parentage. She held her head very high, and had already refused several offers of marriage with a grand air, which had got her hard names among the neighbors. For all that she was a good girl, and one that would have made any man well contented.

Will had never seen much of her; for although the church and parsonage were only two miles from his own door, he was never known to go there but on Sundays. It chanced, however, that the parsonage fell into disrepair, and had to be dismantled; and the parson and his daughter took lodgings for a month or so, on very much reduced terms, at Will's inn. Now, what with the inn, and the mill, and the old miller's savings, our friend was a man of substance; and besides that, he had a name for good temper and shrewdness, which make a capital portion in marriage; and so it was currently gossiped, among their well-wishers, that the parson and his daughter had not chosen their temporary lodging with their

## THE SHORT STORY

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eyes shut. Will was about the last man in the world to be cajoled or frightened into marriage. You had only to look into his eyes, limpid and still like pools of water and yet with a sort of clear light that seemed to come from within, and you would understand at once that here was one who knew his own mind, and would stand to it immovably. Marjory herself was no weakling by her looks, with strong, steady eyes and a resolute and quiet bearing. It might be a question whether she was not Will's match in steadfastness, after all, or which of them would rule the roast in marriage. But Marjory had never given it a thought, and accompanied her father with the most unshaken innocence and unconcern.

The season was still so early that Will's customers were few and far between; but the lilacs were already flowering, and the weather was so mild that the party took dinner under the trellis, with the noise of the river in their ears and the woods ringing about them with the songs of birds. Will soon began to take a particular pleasure in these dinners. The parson was rather a dull companion, with a habit of dozing at table; but nothing rude or cruel ever fell from his lips. And as for the parson's daughter, she suited her surroundings with the best grace imaginable; and whatever she said seemed so pat and pretty that Will conceived a great idea of her talents.

He could see her face, as she leaned forward, against a background of rising pinewoods; her eyes shone peaceably; the light lay around her hair like a kerchief; something that was hardly a smile rippled her pale cheeks, and Will could not contain himself from gazing on her in an agreeable dismay. She looked, even in her

## WILL O' THE MILL

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quietest moments, so complete in herself, and so quick with life down to her finger tips and the very skirts of her dress, that the remainder of created things became no more than a blot by comparison; and if Will glanced away from her to her surroundings, the trees looked inanimate and senseless, the clouds hung in heaven like dead things, and even the mountain tops were disenchanted. The whole valley could not compare in looks with this one girl.

Will was always observant in the society of his fellow-creatures: but his observation became almost painfully eager in the case of Marjory. He listened to all she uttered, and read her eyes, at the same time, for the unspoken commentary. Many kind, simple, and sincere speeches found an echo in his heart. He became conscious of a soul beautifully poised upon itself, nothing doubting, nothing desiring, clothed in peace. It was not possible to separate her thoughts from her appearance. The turn of her wrist, the still sound of her voice, the light in her eyes, the lines of her body, fell in tune with her grave and gentle words, like the accompaniment that sustains and harmonizes the voice of the singer. Her influence was one thing, not to be divided or discussed, only to be felt with gratitude and joy. To Will, her presence recalled something of his childhood, and the thought of her took its place in his mind beside that of dawn, of running water, and of the earliest violets and lilacs. It is the property of things seen for the first time, or for the first time after long, like the flowers in spring, to reawaken in us the sharp edge of sense and that impression of mystic strangeness which otherwise passes out of life with the coming of years; but the sight of a



## THE SHORT STORY

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loved face is what renews a man's character from the fountain upwards.

One day after dinner Will took a stroll among the firs; a grave beatitude possessed him from top to toe, and he kept smiling to himself and the landscape as he went. The river ran between the stepping-stones with a pretty wimple; a bird sang loudly in the wood; the hill-tops looked immeasurably high, and as he glanced at them from time to time seemed to contemplate his movements with a beneficent but awful curiosity. His way took him to the eminence which overlooked the plain; and there he sat down upon a stone, and fell into deep and pleasant thought. The plain lay abroad with its cities and silver river; everything was asleep, except a great eddy of birds which kept rising and falling and going round and round in the blue air. He repeated Marjory's name aloud, and the sound of it gratified his ear. He shut his eyes, and her image sprang up before him, quietly luminous and attended with good thoughts. The river might run forever; the birds fly higher and higher till they touched the stars. He saw it was empty bustle after all; for here, without stirring a foot, waiting patiently in his own narrow valley, he also had attained the better sunlight.

The next day Will made a sort of declaration across the dinner-table, while the parson was filling his pipe.

"Miss Marjory," he said, "I never knew anyone I liked so well as you. I am mostly a cold, unkindly sort of man; not from want of heart, but out of strangeness in my way of thinking; and people seem far away from me. 'Tis as if there were a circle round me, which kept every one out but you; I can hear the others talking



## WILL O' THE MILL

---

and laughing; but you come quite close. Maybe, this is disagreeable to you?" he asked.

Marjory made no answer.

"Speak up, girl," said the parson.

"Nay, now," returned Will, "I wouldn't press her, parson. I feel tongue-tied myself, who am not used to it; and she's a woman, and little more than a child, when all is said. But for my part, as far as I can understand what people mean by it, I fancy I must be what they call in love. I do not wish to be held as committing myself; for I may be wrong; but that is how I believe things are with me. And if Miss Marjory should feel any otherwise on her part, mayhap she would be so kind as shake her head."

Marjory was silent, and gave no sign that she had heard.

"How is that, parson?" asked Will.

"The girl must speak," replied the parson, laying down his pipe. "Here's our neighbor who says he loves you, Madge. Do you love him, ay or no?"

"I think I do," said Marjory, faintly.

"Well then, that's all that could be wished!" cried Will, heartily. And he took her hand across the table, and held it a moment in both of his with great satisfaction.

"You must marry," observed the parson, replacing his pipe in his mouth.

"Is that the right thing to do, think you?" demanded Will.

"It is indispensable," said the parson.

"Very well," replied the wooer.

Two or three days passed away with great delight to

## THE SHORT STORY

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Will, although a bystander might scarce have found it out. He continued to take his meals opposite Marjory, and to talk with her and gaze upon her in her father's presence; but he made no attempt to see her alone, nor in any other way changed his conduct towards her from what it had been since the beginning. Perhaps the girl was a little disappointed, and perhaps not unjustly; and yet if it had been enough to be always in the thought of another person, and so pervade and alter his whole life, she might have been thoroughly contented. For she was never out of Will's mind for an instant. He lay over the stream, and watched the dust of the eddy, and the poised fish, and straining weeds; he wandered out alone into the purple even, with all the blackbirds piping round him in the wood; he rose early in the morning, and saw the sky turn from gray to gold, and the light leap upon the hill-tops; and all the while he kept wondering if he had never seen such things before, or how it was that they should look so different now. The sound of his own mill-wheel, or of the wind among the trees, confounded and charmed his heart. The most enchanting thoughts presented themselves unbidden in his mind.

He was so happy that he could not sleep at night, and so restless that he could hardly sit still out of her company. And yet it seemed as if he avoided her rather than sought her out.

One day, as he was coming home from a ramble, Will found Marjory in the garden picking flowers, and as he came up with her, slackened his pace and continued walking by her side.

"You like flowers?" he said.

## WILL O' THE MILL

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"Indeed I love them dearly," she replied. "Do you?"

"Why, no," said he, "not so much. They are a very small affair, when all is done. I can fancy people caring for them greatly, but not doing as you are just now."

"How?" she asked, pausing and looking up at him.

"Plucking them," said he. "They are a deal better off where they are, and look a deal prettier, if you go to that."

"I wish to have them for my own," she answered, "to carry them near my heart, and keep them in my room. They tempt me when they grow here; they seem to say, 'Come and do something with us;' but once I have cut them and put them by, the charm is laid, and I can look at them with quite an easy heart."

"You wish to possess them," replied Will, "in order to think no more about them. It's a bit like killing the goose with the golden eggs. It's a bit like what I wished to do when I was a boy. Because I had a fancy for looking out over the plain, I wished to go down there — where I couldn't look out over it any longer. Was not that fine reasoning? Dear, dear, if they only thought of it, all the world would do like me; and you would let your flowers alone, just as I stay up here in the mountains."

Suddenly he broke off sharp. "By the Lord!" he cried. And when she asked him what was wrong, he turned the question off, and walked away into the house with rather a humorous expression of face.

He was silent at table; and after the night had fallen and the stars had come out overhead, he walked up and

## THE SHORT STORY

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down for hours in the courtyard and garden with an uneven pace. There was still a light in the window of Marjory's room: one little oblong patch of orange in a world of dark blue hills and silver starlight. Will's mind ran a great deal on the window; but his thoughts were not very lover-like. "There she is in her room," he thought, "and there are the stars overhead — a blessing upon both!" Both were good influences in his life; both soothed and braced him in his profound contentment with the world. And what more should he desire with either? The fat young man and his councils were so present to his mind, that he threw back his head, and, putting his hands before his mouth, shouted aloud to the populous heavens. Whether from the position of his head or the sudden strain of the exertion, he seemed to see a momentary shock among the stars, and a diffusion of frosty light pass from one to another along the sky. At the same instant, a corner of the blind was lifted and lowered again at once. He laughed a loud ho-ho! "one and another!" thought Will. "The stars tremble and the blind goes up. Why, before Heaven, what a great magician I must be! Now if I were only a fool, should not I be in a pretty way?" And he went off to bed, chuckling to himself: "If I were only a fool!"

The next morning, pretty early, he saw her once more in the garden, and sought her out.

"I have been thinking about getting married," he began abruptly; "and after having turned it all over, I have made up my mind it's not worth while."

She turned upon him for a single moment; but his radiant, kindly appearance would, under the circumstances, have disconcerted an angel, and she looked down

## WILL O' THE MILL

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again upon the ground in silence. He could not see her tremble.

"I hope you don't mind," he went on, a little taken aback. "You ought not. I have turned it all over, and upon my soul there's nothing in it. We should never be one whit nearer than we are just now, and, if I am a wise man, nothing like so happy."

"It is unnecessary to go round about with me," she said. "I very well remember that you refused to commit yourself; and now that I see you were mistaken, and in reality have never cared for me, I can only feel sad that I have been so far misled."

"I ask your pardon," said Will stoutly; "you do not understand my meaning. As to whether I have ever loved you or not, I must leave that to others. But for one thing, my feeling is not changed; and for another, you may make it your boast that you have made my whole life and character something different from what they were. I mean what I say; no less. I do not think getting married is worth while. I would rather you went on living with your father, so that I could walk over and see you once, or maybe twice a week, as people go to church, and then we should both be all the happier between whiles. That's my notion. But I'll marry you if you will," he added.

"Do you know that you are insulting me?" she broke out.

"Not I, Marjory," said he; "if there is anything in a clear conscience, not I. I offer all my heart's best affection; you can take it or want it, though I suspect it's beyond either your power or mine to change what has once been done, and set me fancy-free. I'll marry you



## THE SHORT STORY

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if you like; but I tell you again and again, it's not worth while, and we had best stay friends. Though I am a quiet man I have noticed a heap of things in my life. Trust in me, and take things as I propose; or, if you don't like that, say the word, and I'll marry you out of hand."

There was a considerable pause, and Will, who began to feel uneasy, began to grow angry in consequence.

"It seems you are too proud to say your mind," he said. "Believe me that's a pity. A clean shrift makes simple living. Can a man be more downright or honorable to a woman than I have been? I have said my say, and given you your choice. Do you want me to marry you? or will you take my friendship, as I think best? or have you had enough of me for good? Speak out for the dear God's sake! You know your father told you a girl should speak her mind in these affairs."

She seemed to recover herself at that, turned without a word, walked rapidly through the garden, and disappeared into the house, leaving Will in some confusion as to the result. He walked up and down the garden, whistling softly to himself. Sometimes he stopped and contemplated the sky and hill-tops; sometimes he went down to the tail of the weir and sat there, looking foolishly in the water. All this dubiety and perturbation was so foreign to his nature and the life which he had resolutely chosen for himself, that he began to regret Marjory's arrival. "After all," he thought, "I was as happy as a man need be. I could come down here and watch my fishes all day long if I wanted: I was as settled and contented as my old mill."

Marjory came down to dinner, looking very trim and

## WILL O' THE MILL

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quiet; and no sooner were all three at table than she made her father a speech, with her eyes fixed upon her plate, but showing no other sign of embarrassment or distress.

“ Father,” she began, “ Mr. Will and I have been talking things over. We see that we have each made a mistake about our feelings, and he has agreed, at my request, to give up all idea of marriage, and be no more than my very good friend, as in the past. You see, there is no shadow of a quarrel, and indeed I hope we shall see a great deal of him in the future, for his visits will always be welcome in our house. Of course, father, you will know best, but perhaps we should do better to leave Mr. Will’s house for the present. I believe, after what has passed, we should hardly be agreeable inmates for some days.”

Will, who had commanded himself with difficulty from the first, broke out upon this into an inarticulate noise, and raised one hand with an appearance of real dismay, as if he were about to interfere and contradict. But she checked him at once, looking up at him with a swift glance and an angry flush upon her cheek.

“ You will perhaps have the good grace,” she said, “ to let me explain these matters for myself.”

Will was put entirely out of countenance by her expression and the ring of her voice. He held his peace, concluding that there were some things about this girl beyond his comprehension, in which he was exactly right.

The poor parson was quite crestfallen. He tried to prove that this was no more than a true lovers’ tiff, which would pass off before night; and when he was dislodged from that position, he went on to argue that

## THE SHORT STORY

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where there was no quarrel there could be no call for a separation; for the good man liked both his entertainment and his host. It was curious to see how the girl managed them, saying little all the time, and that very quietly, and yet twisting them round her finger and insensibly leading them wherever she would by feminine tact and generalship. It scarcely seemed to have been her doing — it seemed as if things had merely so fallen out — that she and her father took their departure that same afternoon in a farm cart, and went farther down the valley, to wait, until their own house was ready for them, in another hamlet. But Will had been observing closely, and was well aware of her dexterity and resolution. When he found himself alone he had a great many curious matters to turn over in his mind. He was very sad and solitary, to begin with. All the interest had gone out of his life, and he might look up at the stars as long as he pleased, he somehow failed to find support or consolation. And then he was in such a turmoil of spirit about Marjory. He had been puzzled and irritated at her behavior, and yet he could not keep himself from admiring it. He thought he recognized a fine, perverse angel in that still soul which he had never hitherto suspected; and though he saw it was an influence that would fit but ill with his own life of artificial calm, he could not keep himself from ardently desiring to possess it. Like a man who has lived among shadows and now meets the sun, he was both pained and delighted.

As the days went forward he passed from one extreme to another; now pluming himself on the strength of his determination, now despising his timid and silly caution. The former was, perhaps, the true thought of his heart,

## WILL O' THE MILL

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and represented the regular tenor of the man's reflections; but the latter burst forth from time to time with an unruly violence, and then he would forget all consideration, and go up and down his house or garden or walk among the firwoods like one who is beside himself with remorse. To equable, steady-minded Will this state of matters was intolerable; and he determined, at whatever cost, to bring it to an end. So, one warm summer afternoon he put on his best clothes, took a thorn switch in his hand, and set out down the valley by the river. As soon as he had taken his determination, he had regained at a bound his customary peace of heart, and he enjoyed the bright weather and the variety of the scene without any admixture of alarm or unpleasant eagerness. It was nearly the same to him how the matter turned out. If she accepted him, he would have to marry her this time, which perhaps was all for the best. If she refused him, he would have done his utmost, and might follow his own way in the future with an untroubled conscience. He hoped, on the whole, she would refuse him; and then, again, as he saw the brown roof which sheltered her, peeping through some willows at an angle of the stream, he was half inclined to reverse the wish, and more than half ashamed of himself for this infirmity of purpose.

Marjory seemed glad to see him, and gave him her hand without affectation or delay.

"I have been thinking about this marriage," he began.

"So have I," she answered. "And I respect you more and more for a very wise man. You understood me better than I understood myself; and I am now quite certain that things are all for the best as they are."



“ At the same time — ” ventured Will.

“ You must be tired,” she interrupted. “ Take a seat and let me fetch you a glass of wine. The afternoon is so warm; and I wish you not to be displeased with your visit. You must come quite often; once a week, if you can spare the time; I am always so glad to see my friends.”

“ Oh, very well,” thought Will to himself. “ It appears I was right after all.” And he paid a very agreeable visit, walked home again in capital spirits, and gave himself no further concern about the matter.

For nearly three years Will and Marjory continued on these terms, seeing each other once or twice a week without any word of love between them; and for all that time I believe Will was nearly as happy as a man can be. He rather stinted himself the pleasure of seeing her; and he would often walk half-way over to the parsonage, and then back again, as if to whet his appetite. Indeed there was one corner of the road, whence he could see the church-spire wedged into a crevice of the valley between sloping firwoods, with a triangular snatch of plain by way of background, which he greatly affected as a place to sit and moralize in before returning homewards; and the peasants got so much into the habit of finding him there in the twilight that they gave it the name of “ Will o’ the Mill’s Corner.”

At the end of the three years Marjory played him a sad trick by suddenly marrying somebody else. Will kept his countenance bravely, and merely remarked that, for as little as he knew of women, he had acted very prudently in not marrying her himself three years before. She plainly knew very little of her own mind, and, in



## WILL O' THE MILL

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spite of a deceptive manner, was as fickle and flighty as the rest of them. He had to congratulate himself on an escape, he said, and would take a higher opinion of his own wisdom in consequence. But at heart, he was reasonably displeased, moped a good deal for a month or two, and fell away in flesh, to the astonishment of the serving-lads.

It was perhaps a year after this marriage that Will was awakened late one night by the sound of a horse galloping on the road, followed by precipitate knocking at the inn door. He opened his window and saw a farm servant, mounted and holding a led horse by the bridle, who told him to make what haste he could and go along with him; for Marjory was dying, and had sent urgently to fetch him to her bedside. Will was no horseman, and made so little speed upon the way that the poor young wife was very near her end before he arrived. But they had some minutes' talk in private, and he was present and wept very bitterly while she breathed her last.

### III

#### DEATH

Year after year went away into nothing, with great explosions and outcries in the cities on the plain; red revolt springing up and being suppressed in blood, battle swaying hither and thither, patient astronomers in observatory towers picking out and christening new stars, plays being performed in lighted theaters, people being carried into hospitals on stretchers, and all the usual turmoil and agitation of men's lives in crowded centers. Up in Will's valley only the winds and seasons

## THE SHORT STORY

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made an epoch; the fish hung in the swift stream, the birds circled overhead, the pine-tops rustled underneath the stars, the tall hills stood over all; and Will went to and fro minding his wayside inn, until the snow began to thicken on his head. His heart was young and vigorous; and if his pulses kept a sober time, they still beat strong and steady in his wrists. He carried a ruddy stain on either cheek, like a ripe apple; he stooped a little, but his step was still firm; and his sinewy hands were reached out to all men with a friendly pressure. His face was covered with those wrinkles which are got in open air, and which, rightly looked at, are no more than a sort of permanent sunburning; such wrinkles heighten the stupidity of stupid faces; but to a person like Will, with his clear eyes and smiling mouth, only give another charm by testifying to a simple and easy life. His talk was full of wise sayings. He had a taste for other people; and other people had a taste for him. When the valley was full of tourists in the season, there were merry nights in Will's arbor; and his views, which seemed whimsical to his neighbors, were often enough admired by learned people out of towns and colleges. Indeed, he had a very noble old age, and grew daily better known; so that his fame was heard of in the cities of the plain; and young men who had been summer travelers spoke together in cafes of Will o' the Mill and his rough philosophy. Many and many an invitation, you may be sure, he had; but nothing could tempt him from his upland valley. He would shake his head and smile over his tobacco pipe with a deal of meaning. "You come too late," he would answer. "I am a dead man now: I have lived and died already. Fifty years

## WILL O' THE MILL

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ago you would have brought my heart into my mouth; and now you do not even tempt me. But that is the object of long living, that man should cease to care about life." And again: "There is only one difference between a long life and a good dinner; that, in the dinner, the sweets come last." Or once more: "When I was a boy, I was a bit puzzled, and hardly knew whether it was myself or the world that was curious and worth looking into. Now, I know it is myself, and stick to that."

He never showed any symptom of frailty, but kept stalwart and firm to the last; but they say he grew less talkative towards the end, and would listen to other people by the hour in an amused and sympathetic silence. Only, when he did speak, it was more to the point and more charged with old experience. He drank a bottle of wine gladly; above all, at sunset on the hill-top or quite late at night under the stars in the arbor. The sight of something attractive and unattainable seasoned his enjoyment, he would say; and he professed he had lived long enough to admire a candle all the more when he could compare it with a planet.

One night, in his seventy-second year, he awoke in bed in such uneasiness of body and mind that he arose and dressed himself and went out to meditate in the arbor. It was pitch dark, without a star; the river was swollen, and the wet woods and meadows loaded the air with perfume. It had thundered during the day, and it promised more thunder for the morrow. A murky, stifling night for a man of seventy-two! Whether it was the weather or the wakefulness, or some little touch of fever in his old limbs, Will's mind was besieged by

## THE SHORT STORY

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tumultuous and crying memories. His boyhood, the night with the fat young man, the death of his adopted parents, the summer days with Marjory, and many of those small circumstances, which seem nothing to another, and are yet the very gist of a man's own life to himself — things seen, words heard, looks misconstrued — arose from their forgotten corners and usurped his attention. The dead themselves were with him, not merely taking part in this thin show of memory that defiled before his brain, but revisiting his bodily senses as they do in profound and vivid dreams. The fat young man leaned his elbows on the table opposite; Marjory came and went with an apronful of flowers between the garden and the arbor; he could hear the old parson knocking out his pipe or blowing his resonant nose. The tide of his consciousness ebbed and flowed: he was sometimes half asleep and drowned in his recollections of the past; and sometimes he was broad awake, wondering at himself. But about the middle of the night he was startled by the voice of the dead miller calling to him out of the house as he used to do on the arrival of custom. The hallucination was so perfect that Will sprang from his seat and stood listening for the summons to be repeated; and as he listened he became conscious of another noise besides the brawling of the river and the ringing in his feverish ears. It was like the stir of horses and the creaking of harness, as though a carriage with an impatient team had been brought up upon the road before the courtyard gate. At such an hour, upon this rough and dangerous pass, the supposition was no better than absurd; and Will dismissed it from his mind, and resumed his seat upon the arbor chair; and sleep closed



## WILL O' THE MILL

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over him again like running water. He was once again awakened by the dead miller's call, thinner and more spectral than before; and once again he heard the noise of an equipage upon the road. And so thrice and four times, the same dream, or the same fancy, presented itself to his senses; until at length, smiling to himself as when one humors a nervous child, he proceeded towards the gate to set his uncertainty at rest.

From the arbor to the gate was no great distance, and yet it took Will some time; it seemed as if the dead thickened around him in the court, and crossed his path at every step. For, first, he was suddenly surprised by an overpowering sweetness of heliotropes; it was as if his garden had been planted with this flower from end to end, and the hot, damp night had drawn forth all their perfumes in a breath. Now the heliotrope had been Marjory's favorite flower, and since her death not one of them had ever been planted in Will's ground.

"I must be going crazy," he thought. "Poor Marjory and her heliotropes!"

And with that he raised his eyes towards the window that had once been hers. If he had been bewildered before, he was now almost terrified; for there was a light in the room; the window was an orange oblong as of yore; and the corner of the blind was lifted and let fall as on the night when he stood and shouted to the stars in his perplexity. The illusion only endured an instant; but it left him somewhat unmanned, rubbing his eyes and staring at the outline of the house and the black night behind it. While he thus stood, and it seemed as if he must have stood there quite a long time, there came a renewal of the noises on the road: and he turned



## THE SHORT STORY

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in time to meet a stranger, who was advancing to meet him across the court. There was something like the outline of a great carriage discernible on the road behind the stranger, and, above that, a few black pine-tops, like so many plumes.

"Master Will?" asked the newcomer, in brief military fashion.

"That same, sir," answered Will. "Can I do anything to serve you?"

"I have heard you much spoken of, Master Will," returned the other; "much spoken of, and well. And though I have both hands full of business, I wish to drink a bottle of wine with you in your arbor. Before I go, I shall introduce myself."

Will led the way to the trellis, and got a lamp lighted and a bottle uncorked. He was not altogether unused to such complimentary interviews, and hoped little enough from this one, being schooled by many disappointments. A sort of cloud had settled on his wits and prevented him from remembering the strangeness of the hour. He moved like a person in his sleep; and it seemed as if the lamp caught fire and the bottle came uncorked with the facility of thought. Still, he had some curiosity about the appearance of his visitor, and tried in vain to turn the light into his face; either he handled the lamp clumsily, or there was a dimness over his eyes; but he could make out little more than a shadow at table with him. He stared and stared at this shadow, as he wiped out the glasses, and began to feel cold and strange about the heart. The silence weighed upon him, for he could hear nothing now, not even the river, but the drumming of his own arteries in his ears.

## WILL O' THE MILL

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"Here's to you," said the stranger, roughly.

"Here is my service, sir," replied Will, sipping his wine, which somehow tasted oddly.

"I understand you are a very positive fellow," pursued the stranger.

Will made answer with a smile of some satisfaction and a little nod.

"So am I," continued the other; "and it is the delight of my heart to tramp on people's corns. I will have nobody positive but myself: not one. I have crossed the whims, in my time, of kings and generals and great artists. And what would you say," he went on, "if I had come up here on purpose to cross yours?"

Will had it on his tongue to make a sharp rejoinder; but the politeness of an old innkeeper prevailed; and he held his peace and made answer with a civil gesture of the hand.

"I have," said the stranger. "And if I did not hold you in a particular esteem, I should make no words about the matter. It appears you pride yourself on staying where you are. You mean to stick by your inn. Now I mean you shall come for a turn with me in my barouche; and before this bottle's empty, so you shall."

"That would be an odd thing, to be sure," replied Will, with a chuckle. "Why, sir, I have grown here like an old oak-tree; the Devil himself could hardly root me up: and for all I perceive you are a very entertaining old gentleman, I would wager you another bottle you lose your pains with me."

The dimness of Will's eyesight had been increasing all this while; but he was somehow conscious of a sharp

## THE SHORT STORY

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and chilling scrutiny which irritated and yet overmastered him.

"You need not think," he broke out suddenly, in an explosive, febrile manner that startled and alarmed himself, "that I am a stay-at-home because I fear anything under God. God knows I am tired enough of it all; and when the time comes for a longer journey than ever you dream of, I reckon I shall find myself prepared."

The stranger emptied his glass and pushed it away from him. He looked down for a little, and then, leaning over the table, tapped Will three times upon the forearm with a single finger. "The time has come!" he said solemnly.

An ugly thrill spread from the spot he touched. The tones of his voice were dull and startling, and echoed strangely in Will's heart.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with some discomposure. "What do you mean?"

"Look at me, and you will find your eyesight swim. Raise your hand; it is dead-heavy. This is your last bottle of wine, Master Will, and your last night upon the earth."

"You are a doctor?" quavered Will.

"The best that ever was," replied the other; "for I cure both mind and body with the same prescription. I take away all pain and I forgive all sins; and where my patients have gone wrong in life, I smooth out all complications and set them free again upon their feet."

"I have no need of you," said Will.

"A time comes for all men, Master Will," replied the doctor, "when the helm is taken out of their hands. For you, because you were prudent and quiet, it has

## WILL O' THE MILL

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been long of coming, and you have had long to discipline yourself for its reception. You have seen what is to be seen about your mill; you have sat close all your days like a hare in its form; but now that is at an end; and," added the doctor, getting on his feet, "you must arise and come with me."

"You are a strange physician," said Will looking steadfastly upon his guest.

"I am a natural law," he replied, "and people call me Death."

"Why did you not tell me so at first?" cried Will. "I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome."

"Lean upon my arm," said the stranger, "for already your strength abates. Lean on me as heavily as you need; for though I am old, I am very strong. It is but three steps to my carriage, and there all your trouble ends. Why, Will," he added, "I have been yearning for you as if you were my own son; and of all the men that ever I came for in my long days, I have come for you most gladly. I am caustic, and sometimes offend people at first sight; but I am a good friend at heart to such as you."

"Since Marjory was taken," returned Will, "I declare before God you were the only friend I had to look for."

So the pair went arm-in-arm across the courtyard.

One of the servants awoke about this time and heard the noise of horses pawing before he dropped asleep again; all down the valley that night there was a rushing as of a smooth and steady wind descending towards the plain; and when the world rose next morning, sure

## THE SHORT STORY

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enough Will o' the Mill had gone at last upon his travels.

### STUDY NOTES

A favorite maxim of Stevenson was: "Acts may be forgiven, but not even God himself can forgive the hanger back." Stevenson explained in a letter to his friend, Sydney Colvin, that in *Will o' the Mill* he had tried to show what might be said on the other side. Does he convince you in this story that it is better to follow the councils of prudence and cool reason rather than those of the impulses? What purpose is served by dividing the story into its three sections? At the end of the first section Will says, "We are in a rat-trap." What bearing has that upon his decision to stay at the mill rather than go down into the plain? What is the significance of Will's temporary conviction that the stars responded to his shout and that Marjory's curtain was raised and lowered at the same time?



## THE TRUTH OF THE 'OLIVER CROMWELL' \*

By James B. Connolly

James B. Connolly (1868- ) was born in Boston and makes his home there. He is a teller of sea tales, using the technic of the realist in dealing with romantic material. He was educated chiefly in the public and parochial schools of Boston, has served both in the army and navy, and knows intimately the life of which he writes. Perhaps the best known volume of his stories is that entitled *The Crested Seas*.

Martin Carr had done a fine thing that afternoon. Martin and John Marsh were hauling trawls, when a sea capsized their dory. The same sea washed them both clear of the dory. John Marsh could not swim. It looked as if he had hauled his last trawl, and so, beyond all question, he had, but for Martin, who seized one of their buoy-kegs, which happened to bob up near by, and pushed it into John's despairing arms. "Hang on for your life, John," said Martin, and himself struck out for the dory, knowing that the buoy could not support two. It was perhaps forty feet to the bottom of the dory — not a great swim that — but this was a winter's day on the Grand Banks, and a man beaten back by a rough sea and borne down by the weight of heavy clothing, oilskins, and big jack-boots. When he had fought his way to the dory he had to wait a while before he

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## THE SHORT STORY

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dared try to climb up on it — he was so tired — and after he got there he found no strap to the plug, and so nothing to hang on to. He remembered then that he and John had often spoken of fixing up a strap for the plug — and never fixed it.

“ My own neglect,” muttered Martin, “ and now I’m paying for it.”

Clinging to the smooth planking on the bottom of the dory was hard work that day, and becoming harder every minute, for the sea was making. And there was John to keep an eye on. “ How’re you making out, Johnnie-boy? ” he called.

“ It’s heavy dragging, but I’m all right so far,” John answered.

“ And how is it with you now, Johnnie-boy? ” he called in a little while again.

“ I can hang on a while yet, Martin.”

“ Good for you,” said Martin to that.

“ Can you see the vessel? ” then asked John after another space.

“ He’s giving out, and I see no vessel,” thought Martin, but answered cheerily, “ Aye, I see her.”

“ And how far away is she, and what’s she doing? ”

Aloud Martin said, “ Five or six miles maybe, up to win’ard — and she’s taking aboard all but the last dory, and there’s men gone aloft to look for us.” But under his breath, “ And God forgive me if I go to my death with that lie on my lips — but ’tis no deeper than my lips — no deeper.”

Then they waited and waited, until John said, “ Martin, I’ll have to go soon — I can’t hang on much longer.”

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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“ Bide a while, Johnnie-boy — bide a while. Dory-mates we’ve been for many a trip — bide a while with me now, Johnnie.”

But Martin knew that it would be for but a little while for John — for them both — if help did not come soon. Scanning the sea for whatever hope the sea might give, he saw the trawl-line floating on the water. That was the line that ran from their anchor somewhere on the bottom to the buoy keg to which John was clinging. If he could but get hold of that line he could draw John to the dory, with a better chance to talk to him — to put heart into him, for Johnnie was but a lad — no more than five and twenty.

To get the line he would have to swim; and to swim any distance in that rising and already bad sea he would have to cast off most of his clothing. And with most of his clothing gone he would not last too long. Certainly if the vessel did not get them by dark, he would never live through the night. He would freeze to death — that he knew well. But could he live through the night anyway? And even if he could — but what was the good of thinking all night over it? He pulled off his boots, untied his oilskins, hauled off his heavy outer woollens.

“ Johnnie-boy, can you hang on a while longer? ”

“ I dunno, Martin — I dunno. Where’s the vessel? ”

“ She’s bearing down, John.” And with the thought of that second lie on his lips Martin scooped off for the buoy-line, which, after a battle, he grabbed and towed back to the dory. It was a hard fight, and he would have liked well to rest a while — but there was Johnnie. So in he hauled, many a long fathom of slack

## THE SHORT STORY

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ground-line, with gangings and hooks, and after that the buoy-line. He sorrowfully regarded the fine fat fish that he passed along — every hook seemed to have a fish on it. “Man, man, but ’twas only last night I baited up for ye in the cold hold of the vessel — baited with the cold frozen squid, and my fingers nigh frost-bitten.” But every hook was bringing him nearer to his dory-mate.

He felt the line tauten at last. “Have a care now, Johnnie, whilst I draw you to me,” and hauled in till Johnnie was alongside.

But “Good-by,” said Johnnie ere yet Martin had him safe.

“Not yet, Johnnie-boy,” said Martin, and reached for him and held him up and lashed him to the buoy. “You can rest your arms now, lad,” he said, and Johnnie gratefully let go.

“’Tis made of iron a man should be that goes winter trawling,” said Martin, and up on the bottom of the dory he climbed again, this time with infinite difficulty.

They had had the leeward berth, the farthest from the vessel, and by now it was dark. But Martin knew the skipper would not give them up in a hurry, as he explained to John. And by and by they saw the torches from the vessel flare up.

“Wait you, John,” said Martin then, “and save your strength. I’ll hail when I think they’re near enough to hear;” which he did, in a voice that obeyed the iron will and carried far across the waters.

Then the vessel saw them and bore down, the skipper to the wheel and the men lining the rail.

“Be easy with John,” said Martin to the men who

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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first stretched their arms out, "I'm thinking he's nigh gone."

"But all right with him soon," they said as they passed him along the deck. "And how is it with yourself, Martin?" they asked him as he was about to step over the rail.

"Fine and daisy," said Martin. "How is it yourself, boy?" stepping jauntily up, and then, unable longer to stand, fell flat on the deck.

Seeing how it had been with him, they made him go below also, which he, with shipmates helping, did; and also, later, put on the dry shift of clothes they made ready. In the middle of it all he asked, "Where's Johnnie?"

"In his bunk — and full of hot coffee — where you'll be in a minute."

"The hell I will — there's my dory yet to be hoisted in."

"Your dory, Martin? Why, she's in, drained dry and griped long ago."

"What! and me below? And dory in already? What was it? Did I fall asleep or what? Lord! but it's an old man I must be getting. I wouldn't 've believed it. In all my time to sea that's the first time ever I warn't able to lift hand to tackles and my own dory hoisting in." He made for the companion-way, but so weak was he that he fell back when he tried to climb the ladder.

But a really strong man recuperates rapidly. An hour later Martin was enjoying a fine hot supper, while the crew sat around and hove questions at him. They asked for details and he gave them, or at least such of them as had become impressed on his mind; particularly did he



## THE SHORT STORY

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condemn, in crisp phrases, the botheration of boots that leaked and the need of a second plug-strap on the bottom of a dory. "There ought to be a new law about plug-straps," said Martin.

"Did ever a man yet come off the bottom of a dory and not speak about the plug straps?" commented one.

"And leaky boots is the devil," affirmed another — a notorious talker this one, who bunked up in the peak, where he could be dimly seen now — his head out of his bunk that his voice might carry the better. "I bought a pair of boots in Boston once — a Jew up on Atlantic Avenue —"

"In Heaven's name, will you shut up — you and your Atlantic Avenue boots? We'll never hear the end of those boots."

The man in the peak subsided, and he who had quelled him, near to the stove and smoking a pipe, went on for himself, "And what were you thinkin' of, Martin, when you thought you were goin'?"

"Or did you think any time that you was goin'?" asked somebody else.

"Indeed and I did, and a dozen times I thought it — and that 'twas a blessed cold kind of a day for a man to be soaking his feet in the ocean."

"And yet" — the lad in the peak was in commission again — "and yet warn't it some professor said in that book that somebody was reading out of the other day — warn't it him said that salt water ain't nigh so cold as fresh. Is it, Martin?"

"As to that," answered Martin, "I dunno. But I wish 'twas that professor's feet, not mine, was astraddle the bottom of that dory — not to wish him any harm —

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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but a winter's day and the wind no'therly, I found it cold enough."

"I went into a Turkish bath parlor in New York one time," came the conversational voice from the peak. "and hot? My Lord —"

"The man," said the next on watch, taking his mitts from the line above the stove — "the man that'd talk about hot Turkish baths on a night like this to sea — Turkish baths, and Lord in Heaven, two good long hours up there —" He halted to take a sniff up the companion-way. "Two hours — what ought to be done with the like o' him?"

The man by the stove, who awhile before had vanquished the lad in the peak, took his pipe long enough from his mouth to observe, "And for four years now to my knowledge he's been tryin' to tell how hot 'twas in that Turkish bath."

"Hit him with a gob-stick," suggested the cook — "or this rolling-pin" — he was flattening out pie-crust.

"A gob-stick or a rolling-pin," said the next on watch, "is too good for him. Here, take this," and passed the cook's hatchet along the lockers.

The opening and closing of the hatch after the watch had gone on deck admitted a blast of air that made the man in the bunk nearest the steps draw up his legs. The flame in the lamp flared; whereat the original inquirer got up to set the lamp chimney more firmly over the base of the burner, and before he sat down put the question again. What he wanted to know was how Martin felt when he thought he was sure enough going. "The last fifteen or twenty minutes or so I bet you did some thinkin', didn't you, Martin?"

## THE SHORT STORY

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"A little," admitted Martin, and with a long arm gaffed another potato. "Toward the end of it the sea did begin to take on a gray look that I know now was grayer than any mortal sea ever could've been."

"And what were you thinkin' of then, Martin?"

"What was I thinking of? What — Lord, but these apple dumplings are great stuff, arn't they? You don't want to let any of those dumplings get past you, Johnnie. Never mind how used up you feel, come out of your bunk and try 'em. Five or six good plump dumplings inside of you and you'll forget you ever saw a dory."

"He's asleep, Martin."

"Is he? Well, maybe 'tis just as well. 'Twas a hard drag for poor John today. What was I thinking of, you asked me. Well, I'll tell you what I was thinking of. You know what store I set by a good razor. I'd go a hundred mile for a good razor — a *good* razor — any time. You all know that, don't you?"

"Yes — yes —"

"Well, this last time out I brought aboard as fine a looking razor as ever a man laid against his face. Oh, I saw you all eying it the last time I took it out. Don't pretend — I know you. It's right there in my diddy-box, and before I turn in tonight it's a good scrape I'm going to give myself with it — yes. Well, when Johnnie'd said, 'Good-by, Martin' — said it for the second time — 'Good-by, Martin, don't mind me any more — look out for yourself' — said that, and I'd said, 'Hold on a little longer' to him for about the tenth time — well, about that time, when I did begin to think we were sure enough going — with it coming on dark and no sign

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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of the vessel in sight — then it was I couldn't help wondering who in hell aboard this vessel was going to get my razor."

When everybody had done laughing, and after two or three had told how they felt when they were on the bottom of a dory, the persistent one asked again, "Martin, but you must've had some close calls in your time?"

"My share — no more." He was taking a look around the table as he spoke. A lingering, regretful look, and then he gave up any further thought of it. "Ah-h," he sighed, "but I cert'nly took the good out of that meal," and leaning against the nearest bunk-board — his own — drew out his pipe from beneath the mattress. "My share and no more," he repeated, and reached across to the shelf in his bunk and drew forth a plug of tobacco. He cut off the proper quantity and rolled it around between his palms the proper length of time before he spoke again. With the pipe between his teeth he had to speak more slowly. "Any man that's been thirty years trawling will nat'rally have a few things happen to him. Today makes the third time I've been on the bottom of a dory — and cold weather each time — just my blessed luck — cold weather each time" — three times he blew through the stem of his pipe — "and I don't want to be there the fourth. Eddie-boy, hand me a wisp out of the broom at your elbow."

While Martin was cleaning out his pipe somebody put the question generally. Would they rather be on the bottom of a dory out to sea or on a vessel piled up on the rocky shore somewhere?

"On the rocks for me."

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ And for me.”

“ Yes, a chance to get ashore from a wreck, but the bottom of a dory with the sea breaking over you, and it cold maybe — cert’nly it’s never any too warm — wr-r-h! ”

There seemed to be no doubt of what they would take for their choice. “ And yet,” commented Martin when the last word had been said, “ I dunno but the closest call ever I had was when the *Oliver Cromwell* went ashore and was lost off Whitehead.”

“ Cripes, but I’m glad I warn’t on her. A bad business that — a bad business. Hand me that plate, will you, Martin ” — this from the cook.

“ Sure, boy — here y’are — an armful of plates. Cook on a fisherman’s the last job I’d want — you’re never done. And you’re right it was a bad business, cook. When you’ve seen nineteen men washed over one after the other, every man — every man but one, that is — putting up the divil’s own fight for his life before he went — I dunno but what it must be worse than going down at sea altogether, all hands in one second — with no chance at all — though that must be hard enough, too.”

Silence for a while, and then Martin continued: “ If I had it to do over again ” — two long puffs — “ to do over and be lost instead of saved, I don’t know but what I’d rather founder at sea myself. Nineteen men lost — eighteen good men — Lord, but ’twas cruel! ”

Martin, with his head back, was gazing thoughtfully up at the deck-beams. A gentle leading question, and he resumed.

“ We left Gloucester that trip with the skipper’s —



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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but to tell that story right a man ought to begin away back. But will you give me a match, somebody? ”

He lit up again and then settled himself snugly between the edge of the table and his bunk-board, after the manner of a man who is in for a long sitting-out. Once he really started there were but few interruptions. The loss of the *Cromwell* was a serious affair, and nobody broke in thoughtlessly; and only when Martin would stop to refill his pipe, or to light up again when he found he had let it go out, did he make any halt himself.

“ What the Hoodleys of Cape Ann were, and are still,” began Martin, “ of course all of you, or most all of you anyway, know. Or maybe some of you don’t know. Well, they were a hard crowd — but didn’t know it — the kind of people that whenever they got to talking about their own kind, never had any tales to prove maybe that there was even the lightest bit of wit or grace or beauty among them; no, none of that for the Hoodleys of Cape Ann. But to show you what thrifty, hard-headed fore-people they had, they could spin off, any of ’em, a hundred little yarns most any day, as if anybody on earth that knew those of them that were alive would ever doubt what the dead and gone ones must have been. Hard they were — even neighbors that didn’t take life as a dream of poetry said that much of them. Hard they were — man, yes — the kind that little children never toddled up to and climbed on to their knees, nor a man in hard luck by any mistake ever asked the loan of a dollar of — the kind that never a man walked across the street to shake hands with. That’s the kind they were. Take ’em all in all, I guess that

## THE SHORT STORY

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the Hoodleys were about as hard a tribe as you'd find in all Essex County — surely 't isn't possible there were any harder. And yet you couldn't pick a flaw in 'em before the law. They were honest. Everybody had to say that for them — paying their debts, their just debts — as they put it themselves — and collecting their own dues, don't fear, and a great respect for the letter of the law — for the letter of it. And I mind they used to boast that for generations their people had kept clear of the poor-houses, and that all had been church-members in good standing. Well, not exactly all — for to be exact and truthful — they themselves used to put it that way — there was one here and there that had broken away. But such had been rare, as one of them — a strong church-member — used to put it, and the devil is ever active, and speaking of the devil, this particular member'd go on, there is always the blistering pit for the unrighteous. That last I s'pose he thought he ought to put in, because everybody knew that of all the people that fell from grace, the wickedest, the most blasphemous, the most evil of all evil livers had been those of the Hoodleys that had back-slided. Once they went to the bad they cert'nly went beyond all hope; and nobody did they curse out more furiously than their own people every time they did start in.

“ Well, the Hoodleys weren't a seafaring people originally. They moved over to Gloucester, y'see, at one particular time when everybody was expecting in some way to make money out of fishing. George Hoodley was a lad then — seventeen — with the hard kind of a face and the awkward body that everybody nat'rally looked for in one of his breed. And he had the kind of a mind,

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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I callate, that his father would like a boy of his to have. Well, George signed right away for a boy's wages with a prudent master — old Sol Tucker it was — that went in the *Distant Shore* so long. They used to say that Sol wore the same pair of jack-boots out of her that he had when he first went aboard, and there was eighteen years between his first and last trips in her. I mind the jack-boots — and they were cert'nly well patched when I saw them — though no more than twelve-year-old then. That'll give you an idea of Sol. And George Hoodley put in thirteen years with Sol, and thirteen long hard drags of years they must've been. I misdoubt that any of us here could've stood those thirteen — no, sir, not for vessel's, skipper's and hand's share together. Well, George stood it, and I don't b'lieve he ever knew he was missing anything in life. But he had something to show for it, as he'd say himself. When he left old Sol he was able to buy a half interest and go master of a good vessel. I went with him in her — the *Harding* — two trips — just two, no more."

Martin halted to light up again, and somebody asked, "Warn't it the *Harding*, Martin, that had the small cabin?"

"Yes, the smallest, they say, that ever was seen in a fisherman. Just about room to stand between the steps and the stove and between the stove and the bulkhead again — and not much better for'ard — a forec's'le so small that the crew used to say they had to go on deck to haul on their oilskins. She was all hold. Well, while he was in the *Harding*, George made a great reputation for all kinds of carefulness. Most men that went with him said he was altogether too careful for any mortal

## THE SHORT STORY

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use; and maybe that was so. But his savings kept piling up, and there was plenty of other careful men to ship with him and abide by him.

“ One thing that George and his people used to boast about was that he warn’t like a good many other fishermen. While a good many of them were putting in time ashore drinking, skylarking, or if it warn’t no more than to spent a quiet sociable evening with their friends or their own families — during all that George was attending to business, for business it was to him. He was talking one day of those who said fishing was a venture, or even adventure, and he’d been reading somewhere, he said, of the joy that somebody thought fine, strong men ought to get out of fishing. He almost smiled when he was telling it. The joy of fishing! If you had a good trip of fish and got a good price for it, why yes, fishing was good fun then. But as far as he could see it was like any other kind of work. You put in about so much time at it and took good care of your money, and at the end of the year you had about so much to show for it. And as for the fun of fighting a breeze of wind that some of them talked about, seeing how long you could hang on to your canvas without losing your spars, or how far down you could let your vessel roll before she’d capsize — none of that for him. And it was all rot, their pretending they got any fun out of it. They had the same blood and nerve and senses as any other humans, and he knew that for himself he was content to stay hove-to when it blew one of the living gales they talked about, and satisfied, too, to shorten sail in time, even if he was bound home, when it blew hard enough. Gloucester would be there when he got there — it wouldn’t blow



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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away. Cert'nly, he'd admit, the drivers'd outsail him on a passage and beat him out of the market once in a while, but in the long run his way paid best. He could name the foolish fellows that'd been lost — and the fingers of both hands wouldn't begin to name them; yes, and left families to starve, some of 'em — and he himself was alive and still bringing home the fish, and everybody in Gloucester knew what he had to show for it.

“ Well, by that time, everybody in Gloucester did know what he had to show for it, and everybody in Gloucester said it was about time he began to look around for a wife, though nobody expected George Hoodley to look around for a wife after the regular manner of fishermen, who don't look around at all, so far as I c'n see. We ourselves, or most of us, anyway, liking the girl pretty well and she willing, gen'rally hurry up to get married 'bout as soon as we find ourselves with a couple of months' rent ahead.

“ But not that way with George Hoodley. It wasn't until he was forty-five that he began to look around after the manner of his people for a wife. There was to be no rushing into the expenses of matrimony; but with two good vessels, and a house all clear, a man might well think of it — or leastways I imagine that's the way he thought it out — if he wasted any time thinking of it at all.

“ Now, if George Hoodley had not been like other men during all the years he was fishing, if he hadn't joined in the talk of his mates on what was worth having in life — you know how fishermen gen'rally talk when they get going on some things — even if George Hoodley pretended to think that he thought they were a lot of



## THE SHORT STORY

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blessed fools, yet it is more than likely that the opinions of the men he went to sea with had their influence with him just the same. It stands to reason they were bound to after years of it. And then clear back he must've come of flesh-and-blood people like anybody else, for though nobody could imagine the Hoodleys having weaknesses like other people, yet cert'nly, if you went far enough back, there must've been ancestors among 'em all — one or two — that enjoyed life the same as other people.

“ Well, for a wife George took a very pretty girl who was young enough — some of you that know her know that well — young enough to have had grandchildren to him. Twenty or twenty-one, light-haired, pretty face, and a trim figure. I didn't like her eyes or her mouth myself, but everybody agreed she was pretty. She had never been so far away from home that she could not be back again the same day — and that certified to her character with some people. For other things, she would come into some money when her father died. And her father didn't object to George Hoodley. He was a thrifty man, too, and said all right — made George's way easy, in fact.

“ Now, I callate that George thought that he never did a wiser thing in all his life than when he married that girl. Among the men he knew there were some that'd got pretty wives but no money; and others, money but plain-lookers. He was getting both, good looks and money, and he could laugh at them all — those who wanted her because of the money in prospect or those others who were in love with her face. And maybe he didn't laugh at some of 'em! — the sail-carriers and

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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others who imagined that a reputation for foolishness at sea won women's hearts. It was a great stroke of business altogether. He would get his share of good living yet—he boasted of that. He had always taken the best care of himself—never drank and seldom smoked—and then only in the way of business—was in the prime of life, had a tough constitution, and his wife-to-be was young and pretty. He could laugh at all of them.

“ Nearly everybody in Gloucester said nice things to George. ‘ My, but you’re the deep one—and lucky? Oh, no, you’re not a bit lucky! But you always did have a long head— ’ That’s the way most people talked to him, and he liked it. As for the few who didn’t seem pleased—the three or four who hinted, but didn’t ask outright if he thought he was doing a wise thing—George said it was easy enough to place them—they’d like to get her themselves. If he was only another kind of a man he might have been warned in time, but he was that kind that nobody felt sorry for. And that’s a hard thing, too.

“ Well, they were married, and the wonderful thing of George letting his vessel go out a trip without him was on exhibition to the people of Gloucester. Yes, sir, she went to sea the day he was married. He stayed ashore that trip—that trip, but not the second.

“ The truth was they didn’t get along well together; which warn’t remarkable maybe—she young and pretty, and he the age he was and more than looking it. Forty-seven’s a fine age for some men, but not for George’s kind—leather-skinned he was, with lean chops of jaws, a mouth as tight as a deck beam, a turkey neck—you’ve

## THE SHORT STORY

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seen the turkey necks — and eyes that were cold as a dead haddock's.

“ George, I callate, was beginning to learn that a woman was a different proposition from a vessel, and that there were things about a woman that had to be studied out. Not that I think he tried overhard to study this one out. Listening to him as I had many a time before he got married, I knew that he figured that a woman, like everything else, had her place in the universe, and she ought to know it — or be made to know it. And now here was his wife's case — a steady man for a husband, a good house to live in, grub and her clothes all found, or anyway as much clothes as he thought fit and proper for her to have. Could a woman expect more, or a man do more, than that?

“ ’Twarn't long after he got married that things began to go wrong, not only at home but out to sea. There was the trip he broke his ankle. Coming home, he looked maybe for a little show of grief on the part of his wife; but if he did, he didn't find it. Indeed, she even said he ought to go to a hospital instead of making it hard for her at home. ’Twas common talk that she said that.

“ Going out his next trip, with his leg not yet well-knit and himself having to limp out the door, he and his wife had words. Billie Shaw, passing by, heard them. ‘ I don't care if I never see you again,’ he said. ‘ And if you think I'd care if I never saw you again either, you're mistaken. I wouldn't care if you're lost — you and your vessel — only I wouldn't like to see all the crew lost.’

“ That last must have set him to thinking, for he didn't sail that day as he said he would, but put in a

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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day talking to people around town. I know he asked me, for one, a lot of questions. I didn't know till later what he was driving at. 'Twas while he was questioning me that he coaxed me into shipping with him. 'Just this trip, Martin,' he said. 'And your cousin Dan Spring's thinking of coming out with me this time — to help me out. Two men left me suddenly today, and if you'll come out Dan'll surely come.' And so out of good-nature I said I'd go with him. It's blessed little he got out of me, though, in answer to his other questions, but he found plenty of others willing to talk.

"Well, on the passage out we all noticed he seemed an absent-minded man. We noticed, too, or thought we did, that he used to forget that his leg warn't yet very strong and that now and then he had to pull up when it seemed to hurt him bad.

"That trip — well, it was a queer one from the first. With myself and my cousin Dan, who were dory-mates, it warn't nothing but accidents. There was that after the first haul of fish when we were dropping down to come alongside. It was a bit rough — that's a fact. Some said that for so careful a man it was surprising that the skipper had ordered the dories out at all that day. However, we were just ahead of her — under the end of her bowsprit almost — and of course Dan and myself nat'rally looked for the skipper to look out for us. We were so near that Dan had taken in his oars and had the painter ready to heave aboard. I was at the oars. One stroke more, I thought, and we'll be all right, when whing! the first thing we knew around came the vessel and down on us. I couldn't do anything with the dory, she being down to her gunnels with fish. Well,



## THE SHORT STORY

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Dan had time to holler to me, and I hollered to him — no more than that — when she was on us. By a miracle, you might say, we both managed to grab the bob-stay. The stem of the vessel cut the dory like it was a cracker, and then under her keel it went.

“ Not knowing what to make of it all, we climbed aboard over the bow. Our faces were no more than above the knight-heads than the skipper yelled. We ran aft and asked him what was wrong. He stared at us for a second as if he couldn't understand.

“ ‘ What's it? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Why, I thought you two were gone. ’

“ ‘ And so we were for all of you. A man that's been to sea as long as you, George Hoodley, ’ I said, ‘ and put a wheel the wrong way! Nobody ever said you were the cleverest man out of Gloucester to handle a vessel, but cert'nly you know down from up. ’

“ ‘ Martin, ’ he said, ‘ I give you my word. Just as I grabbed the wheel that time a sea came aboard, the vessel lurched and down on deck I went with my weak ankle giving way under me. ’

“ Well, our dory was gone, but later in the trip one of the crew, Bill Thornton, was troubled with a felon on his finger. 'Twarn't anything very bad, and Bill himself said it didn't amount to anything, but the skipper thought Bill'd better stay aboard, and his dory-mate with him. ‘ And, Martin, you and Dan take his dory, ’ says the skipper — ‘ you two being so used to each other it'll be the best way. ’

“ Well, that was all right. We took their dory and gear and went out the next set — only two days after our own dory had been lost, mind you. Well, this time



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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we got lost in the fog and were out overnight. It turned out a snowy night, and cold, with fog again in the morning. That morning, so we heard from the crew later, the skipper said, after a little jogging about, 'They must be gone — we may as well give it up.' Well, everybody aboard thought there was a good chance for us yet, and one or two hinted at that. But he wouldn't have it. 'Run her westerly,' he said, and went below. Well, to everybody's surprise we popped up just then almost under her bow. 'Twas quite a little sea on at the time, but the man at the wheel this time didn't have any bad ankle. He jibed her over in time and we climbed aboard. One man ran down to call the skipper and tell him the news, but the skipper only swore at him. 'Do you mean to tell me that the watch shifted the course of this vessel without orders from me? I'll talk to him.' And he did talk to him, and in a most surprising way. We didn't know what to make of it. He raved. 'Discipline,' he said — he'd always been a great hand for discipline aboard his vessel, but this warn't any case for discipline — 'twas men's lives.

"Well, they expected to have two or three more days of fishing aboard the *Cromwell* after that day, but I made a kick. Never again would I haul a trawl for a skipper of his kind, I said.

" 'What?' asked the skipper. 'You mean to mutinize on me?'

" 'Call it mutiny or what you please,' said I, 'but myself and Dan don't leave this vessel again in a dory.'

" 'Don't you know I can run into the nearest port, Newf'undland or Nova Scotia, and put you ashore?'

" 'I do.'

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ ‘ Or take you both back to Gloucester and have you up before the court? ’

“ ‘ You can put us up before forty courts — the highest in the land, if you want — and maybe they’ll sentence us to ten years in jail, or to be strung up to a yard-arm somewheres. But I don’t callate they will; I don’t callate so — not after we tell our story. It’s a fine thing fishermen have come to when their own skippers try to lose ’em.’

“ ‘ Lose you? Me try to lose you? And why in God’s name would I try to lose you? ’

“ ‘ Lord knows. But you do, and there’s an end of it. Dan and I don’t swing any dory over the rail of this vessel this trip again.’

“ He said nothing to that. Only he looked at me, then a long look at Dan, and turned into his bunk again. Later in the day he drew out a quart bottle of whiskey and began to drink. That was a new thing to his crew that knew him so long. They’d pretty good reason to believe that he’d kept a bottle in his closet under lock and key for a little drink on the quiet when the dories were out and nobody by; but they knew he did it slyly so as not to have the name of it, or maybe so’s not to have to ask anybody to join him, and so save expense. But everybody knew that whatever liquor he took that way was not enough to hurt him. Yes, a sober man he’d always been — everybody had to say that for him. But now he was drinking with all hands looking on, taking it down in gulps, and when the first quart was gone he brought out another, drinking by himself all the time.

“ However, he warn’t drunk by a good deal when in the middle of the night he ordered all hands on deck to

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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make sail. The men thought he was crazy — but he was the skipper. If anything happened 'twas his lookout, not theirs. So they gave her the full mains'l, and then he ordered the man at the wheel to swing her off.

“ Yes, sir, and what course? ”

“ ‘ What course? Didn't I say to swing her off? Put her fair before it. Jibe over your fores'l and let her run — let her run, I tell you. Whichever way she goes let her run. ’ ”

“ And we let her run all that night and all next day. She was under her winter rig — in March it was — no topm'sts, but the four lower sails alone were enough for any Gloucester fisherman that second night. I mind 'twas nine o'clock that night, and Abner Tucker's watch. A staid, sober man was Abner. He'd been to sea for twenty years and been with George for ten years — stayed with him because he knew him for a prudent man, I s'pose. Well, Abner took the wheel, and getting the feel of it, cried out, ‘ Lord in heaven, it's like trying to steer two vessels — she's running wild! ’ and braced himself against the wheel, but warn't braced firm enough, or he warn't strong enough, for he let her broach, and a sea swept her quarter, burying him and the vessel both. Over the top of the house went that sea and down into the cabin by the ton. They were floated out in the cabin and came tumbling up on deck. Josh Whitaker, a bait knife in his hand, jumped to the main peak halyards.

“ The skipper noticed him. ‘ What you goin' to do? ’ ”

“ ‘ Cut,’ says Josh.

“ ‘ You cut and I'll cut you! ’ The skipper, too, had a bait knife, and he lunged with it for Josh. Then he

## THE SHORT STORY

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stood guard by the halyards. 'Or if anybody else thinks to cut' — and we saw the rest of it in his face — dark as it was, we saw that.

"The skipper was still on guard there when Dan and myself came on deck for our watch — that was eleven o'clock. Dan went for'ard to look out and I took the wheel from Abner, and glad enough he was to turn the wheel over when he gave me the course. I looked in the binnacle to make sure he had it right.

" 'Still on that course?' I asked, when I'd seen 'twas so. 'Where's the skipper?'

" 'Here,' said the skipper himself from between the house and the weather rail, where he was still watching that nobody bothered the halyards, I s'pose. 'What's it?'

" 'How about the course?' I asked.

" 'What's wrong with the course?'

" 'No'west by west half west — is it right?'

" 'No'west by west half west, or whatever it is — yes. And why not?'

" 'Oh, nothin', if you say it's right.'

" 'And why isn't it right? Why not? Why don't you spit it out? What's wrong, anyway?'

" 'What's wrong?' I said. 'Don't you know we warn't much more than three hundred miles off shore on this course when we swung her off last night, and we've been coming along now for twenty-three hours — and the clip she's been coming!'

" He said nothing to that for a while, and then it was, 'And so you don't think the course is right?'

" 'No, I don't — not if you're intending to make Gloucester.'

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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“ ‘ That so? Not if I was intending to make Gloucester? And where in the name o’ heaven am I headin’ for if not Gloucester? ’

“ ‘ Where? — where? Damned if I know,’ says I. ‘ Hell, maybe.’

“ ‘ That so? Well, Gloucester or hell, drive her, you.’

“ ‘ Oh, I’ll drive her.’ I threw it back in his teeth that way, spat to looard, took a fresh hold of the wheel and did drive her just to let him know he couldn’t scare me. Cripes, but I gave her all she wanted!

“ It was wicked, though, the way she was going. She warn’t a big sailer, the *Cromwell* — George Hoodley never did believe in the racing kind — but any old plug could’ve sailed that night. Along toward midnight it got thick o’ snow, I mind, and we came near running into a vessel hove to under a fores’l — ‘ A fisherman,’ Dan for’ard called out — and as we shot by her a warning hail came to us.

“ ‘ What’s that he said? ’ asked the skipper of Dan.

“ ‘ Something about where we’re bound for,’ answered Dan.

“ ‘ That so? What’s it of his business? ’ and then he went below for a spell.

“ From the wheel I could see him taking another drink under the cabin light. He had got to where he wasn’t bothering to pour it into a mug, but took it straight from the bottle — long pulls, too. He came on deck again just as my watch and Dan’s was up. To Charlie Feeney, who was next man to the wheel, I said that the skipper ought to be spoken to about hauling her up. So Charlie did.



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ ‘ Who in the devil’s name is skipper of this vessel anyway? ’ was all the answer he got.

“ Henry Carsick, who was Charlie’s dory-mate, said he didn’t know what to make of it. ‘ I’m blessed if ever I knew him to carry half this sail in a breeze before, and I’ve been with him three years,’ said he to me as he went for’ard.

“ Well, Dan and me hadn’t more than got off our oilskins after standing watch, when a hail came from Henry on watch for’ard. ‘ Some kind of a roaring ahead of us,’ repeated Charlie from the wheel. And just then it was that, leaping like a hound, she hit something good and hard — a check, a grinding along her bottom, a rearing of her bow. But nothing small was going to stop her the clip she was going then, and whatever it was she was clear of it. By that time the whole crew was tumbling up on deck. ‘ God in Heaven, what is it? ’ they called out one to another. Another leap of her, and it was clear white astern and on either side. ‘ A wall of rock ahead!’ said Henry Carsick and came tumbling aft — ‘ a ledge of solid rock, skipper! ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ said the skipper, in a kind of studyin’ tone — ‘ and it *was* hell or Gloucester, warn’t it ’ — he turned to me — ‘ I said it’d be, didn’t I? ’

“ ‘ That’s what you did,’ said I, ‘and it ain’t Gloucester. You ought to be proud of yourself — nineteen men, maybe, lost for you — nineteen men. I’m not counting yourself — you ought to be lost. Will we put a dory over? ’

“ ‘ Put it over if you want to. Do what you please. I’m done with this vessel — I’m done with fishing.’

“ ‘ I guess that’s right,’ says I. ‘ And I guess you

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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ain't th' only one that gets through with fishing tonight.' Then I turned to the crew: 'What d'y' say if we try and get a dory over and see what's around us?'

"They said all right, and we unhooked the tackles. A few heaves and up went the dory into the air. It hung there for a second or two. We tried to push it over, but the wind took it, tore it from us, and dropped it into the sea. The sea took it, tossed it up and back against the rail and on to the deck. One smash, another, another, and it was kindling wood.

" 'Try another,' said Dan, who was standing by the rail to his waist in water. He had a line about his waist, and that was all kept him inboard. We hoisted another dory out of the nest, and we had to fight even as we were hoisting for a footing on her deck, it was that steep and the great seas running clean over her. Up into the air we hoisted the second dory — up and out again. Once more the howling wind and the boiling sea took it — once more 'twas kindling wood.

" 'There's seven more left — try another,' said Dan. A great man, Dan. If I go to sea for forty years I never expect to see a better — I could 'most cry when I think of how he was lost that night.

" 'One of my hands mashed to a pulp,' said somebody.

" 'Well, we can't stop to doctor you,' I called to him. 'Let somebody take your place at the tackles. Now, then, lads. I don't know that it'll do any good when we do get it over, but maybe we c'n take a look around — maybe find a landing place somewheres.'

" 'I'll go in her,' calls out someone. 'Give me a chance now —'

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ ‘ My chance,’ said Dan — ‘ my chance, ain’t it, Martin? ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ says I to Dan, and looking back at it now I say, ‘ God forgive you, Martin Carr,’ and yet ’twarn’t no fault of mine.

“ Out went the dory, and when she hung for a second Dan swung himself after it. He made it and called, ‘ Pay out that line!’ and dug in with the oars. We could just see him. We were still paying out the line — we could still hear his voice, when ‘ Haul in — I broke an oar!’ he called.

“ ‘ Haul in!’ said I; but when he went to haul in there was nothing to haul — the line had parted.

“ ‘ God, he’s gone!’ said somebody.

“ ‘ That’s what he is,’ said a voice beside me — ‘ I was bound he would be.’

“ ’Twas the skipper. From by the rail he crept up to me with a knife-blade shining — a bait knife it was, the same he’d had all night. And then I knew what it meant — he had cut the line. I stood away from him first, then I grabbed him and picked him up and had a mind to heave him over the rail, and then — I don’t know why — I didn’t. I dropped him on the deck. ‘ You’ll get yours before this night’s over,’ I said.

“ ‘ A devil of a lot I care,’ he said.

“ The rest of them, or at least those that warn’t too busy with the next dory or trying to look out for themselves, called out to ask what was wrong with the two of us. I didn’t answer, nor did the skipper.

“ Dan was only the first to go that night. We kept trying to launch dories — trying, but losing them — smashed to kindling-wood they were — until the whole

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

---

nine of them were gone. During that time four men were washed over. One, with a line about him, made a desperate try, but was hauled back dead, I mind. We laid his body on the house, and afterward, when I went to look for it, it was gone — swept over. The seas were wicked.

“ The wind was blowing harder, the big combers were coming even higher, and the gang began to be washed off her deck and lost one after the other. We took to the rigging when we saw twarn’t any more use on deck. And in the middle of it all what d’y’ think the skipper did? What d’y’ think he did — the man that was the cause of it all? Well, while his crew were going — to heaven or hell as it might be — washed over and lost, one after the other — he goes below and has a mug-up for himself. Yes, sir, goes into the forec’s’le and has a mug of coffee and a piece of pie. Somebody that’d seen him going below called out to the rest of us. The Lord’s truth that. And the rest of us blasphemed to God — we were that black with rage against him.

“ Well, there was ten of us, I think, in the rigging, all hoping to be able to last until daylight, when we thought we might be able to see where we were. Hoping only ’twas — not expecting — for ’twas getting colder, with the spray beginning to freeze where it struck and making hard work of holding on to the rigging. ’Twas wild — her sails still up, with the reef points beating a devil’s tattoo where the canvas warn’t tearing up and flying out like long-tailed ghostly things in the blackness. Lashed to the rigging we must’ve been for all of two hours, I callate. Some began to take note of the numbness creeping over them — one or two — the most discouraged.



## THE SHORT STORY

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The warmer-blooded, or the strongest, tried to keep up a cheering talk — tried to crack jokes and one thing or another.

“ Well, we had hope some of us of lasting through the night, when crack! We knew what was coming then. I slipped the half-hitch that had been holding me to the shrouds and climbed higher. I was 'most to the mast-head, clear of the gaff, when over the side went her forem'st — half a dozen men clinging to the forerigging, a-swaying and shaking — and after it went the mainm'st with four more, I think, in her rigging.

“ Well, sir, when the forem'st went I was thrown into clear water. I had plenty of line to my hand, with a turn of it around the mast-head, and with that I hauled myself back. I hung on to an arm of the cross-trees for a while there before I started to work my way back along the mast toward the vessel. I didn't believe then I'd ever live to reach the vessel. The sail, as I said, had been kept standing on her, and now it was lying flat on the water, now sagging down with the weight of the water over it, and now bellying into the air when a great sea would get under it. I saw a shadow of a man — hanging on to a reef point he was — go down with that sail once, then go up with it once, and then the sail split under the weight of the sea, and I never saw him again. But I heard him holler as he went. What he said I don't know — I had to keep on crawling. The hoops of the sail were around the mast, of course, and I used them and the bolt-rope of the fores'l where the sail was torn away to pull myself along. And, mind you, I had to watch out for the forem'st itself. It reared and tossed with one sea after another — me astride it most of the



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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time — like a man on horseback, though hard riding enough I found it. The least little tap of that and I knew where I'd be — bait for the fishes that I'd baited for so often. Well, between the hoops and the bolt-rope and the rigging I hauled myself along. And the way that mast rolled! Forty times I swear I thought I was good as dead. But no. And so I dragged myself along, watching out when I went upon the crests and holding my breath when I was pulled down into the depths — hung on desperately, mindful that the quietest knock of that big spar would end me then and there, and mindful, too, that once my grip loosed I'd be swallowed up in the roaring. Tired I was — aye, and weak, but I kept on working toward the vessel's hull always.

“ Against the white sails and white foam I made out two others struggling like myself. ‘ That you, Bill? ’ said one. ‘ Yes — that you, Mike? ’ I heard from the other. I knew who they were then, and called out myself. Between two seas one slipped from sight. The other still crept on. ‘ That you, Bill? ’ I called out. ‘ Bill's gone,’ said the voice — 'twas Mike Cannon. ‘ That's tough,’ I said. ‘ It is that,’ says Mike, ‘ after the fight he put up. But how're you making out yourself? ’ ‘ Pretty good — how're you? ’ I said. ‘ Kind of tired. I doubt if I'll hold out much longer — something smashed inside my oilskins. My chest and a few ribs, I think — and one arm, too. A wild night and tough going, isn't it, Martin? ’

“ There was no more chance to talk. Two awful seas followed, and after the second a quiet spell — the back suction. I looked around. I thought I saw Mike, but warn't sure. I guess now I didn't, for another sea, the

## THE SHORT STORY

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biggest of all, tossed the whole lot of wreckage back against the hull of the *Cromwell*. There was a grinding and a battering as the spars met the hull. Myself up in the air, I looked down and found myself over her deck, and then — my guardian angel it must've been that whispered me then — I let go. 'God in heaven!' I found myself saying and fetched up on her deck, the luckiest man in all the North Atlantic.

"Against what was left of the rail I found myself, close to what was left of the forerigging. At first I warn't sure just where I was at all, but that's where I found myself when my eyes were clear to see again. And when my eyes were clear I looked around. The hull of her was heaving to every sea, moving inshore maybe a foot at a time, with her bowsprit pointing to a shadow of rock or cliff ahead. I looked around again, and, so far as I could make out, everything — house, gurry-gids, booby-hatches — everything was gone off her. Only the two stumps of her masts seemed to be left on deck. But, no — the forec's'le hatch was left. Her bow, being so much higher than her stern, saved that. I saw that and — I don't know why — toward the forec's'le I crawled. The hatches were closed. I slid them back. Down the steps I went, and when I was below — I don't know why either — I thought of the razors in my bunk. I might's well get them couple of razors, I says to myself, and starts for my bunk, which was in the peak, the same bunk, clear for'ard on the starb'd side, that the Turkish-bath lad is in now. 'Twas like swimming down there. The water by the butt of the forem'st, 'bout like where I'm sitting here tonight, was over my waist. I couldn't help thinking then how deep 'twas and getting deeper

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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fast, with the seas pouring down the companion-way. I was thinking of that — thinking I ought to've closed the hatches after me — and was looking back toward the steps, when I heard a little noise, or thought I did, for the pounding of the seas overhead was making an awful racket and I warn't sure. But I heard it again, the clinking of crockery like, and I looked around — back behind the steps — at last, and there, behind the stove, leaning up against the cook's lockers — I'd clean forgot him — was the skipper. He was having another mug-up for himself.

“ ‘ God! ’ I said; ‘ you here? ’ ”

“ He half turned, dropping a coffee mug he had in his hand. Then taking a second look: ‘ Man, but I thought it was the ghost of Dan Spring. But you two look something alike. Come to think, you're cousins, ain't you? Man, if you could only see yourself! Blood — blood — and bruises — and your eyes, man — your eyes! But have a mug of coffee. Warn't it lucky? — here's the coffee boiler hove up here on the lockers — and some coffee still left in it — and hot. And there's a pie in the grub locker — on the top shelf. If it'd been on the bottom shelf it'd be all wet and floating around. Ain't that luck? And look here — a good half pint of whiskey left yet. It's been an awful night, ain't it? What d'y' say? ’ ”

“ He held the bottle toward me. I took it from him and smashed it on the stove. And then I gave him a bit of my mind. ‘ And so, George Hoodley, you're so afraid, after all, to go to your death that you must go drunk, hah? The soul that the Lord gave you — that soul is going from a drunken body straight to the God

## THE SHORT STORY

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that's going to judge you. And how'll you be judged, d'y' think, for this night's work, George Hoodley? Could you listen to what was said on deck tonight and not die of fright at what you've done? Did you hear Sam Catiss? 'I'm not afraid to go, if go I must,' says Sam "but, Lord, there's one or two things I wish I hadn't done," says Sam. You heard him — we all heard him — and then he was swept over. And but for you, George Hoodley, maybe he'd have had time to make his peace before he went. And up in the rigging — you warn't there, I know — even you, if you'd heard what Peter Harkins said when we all knew her spars were going — when Peter heard the first crack and knew what it meant. And knowing he was going, with his last free breath he said things of you that if I had an enemy I wouldn't want him to hear — not if I hated him bad enough to want to see him in the bottom of the deepest, hottest hold of hell — '

" 'Hell!' he breaks in; 'there ain't no hell — no heaven, nor God, nor anything.'

" 'God forgive you for that. You — '

" 'God forgive me? Martin, you talk like an old woman. I tell you, since I was no higher than one of my jack-boots I've been listening to talk of hell and heaven — mostly hell, though — and I used to believe it one time. Nobody believed it any more than I did till when — till I began to see that the very people that was talking it so hard warn't governed by what they said. What they wanted was everybody else to be governed by what they preached. I tell you I know. I've seen it in my own people — I know them better than you do. It's years now — I was one of the fools, one that never



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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let anybody, I thought, get the best of me at anything. You're one — though you're a good man in your fool way, Martin. I had no grudge against you, not even when I tried to lose you in the dory. But I had to get rid of your dory-mate.'

“ ‘Get rid of Dan? And why Dan?’ ”

“ ‘Why? There again! You mean to tell me you don't know? I looked around before I went out this trip. Nobody'd tell me, but I knew his first name was Dan — Dan something. One day when the crew was out hauling the trawls I rummaged his bunk and found part of a letter in my wife's writing under his mattress. That was the same day I ran over Dan and you in the dory. 'Twas for that chance I'd been pretending my ankle warn't better. Weak ankle, bah!’ He drove the bad foot against the stove and crushed in the oven door. ‘Anything weak about that foot — bah? “Dear Dan,” the note read — I know my wife's handwriting, and his name's Dan.’ ”

“ ‘Wait a bit — wait a bit. How do you know it was this Dan? Are there no other Dans in Gloucester?’ ”

“ ‘How do I know? And it in his bunk — under the mattress in his bunk?’ ”

“ ‘That's all right. And whose bunk was it before Dan Spring got it? Another Dan's, warn't it — Dan Powell's? And didn't he leave the mattress behind him when he left this vessel trip before last? Didn't he? And warn't Dan Powell just the kind of a man that'd do a thing like that, and not Dan Spring — my own cousin? And so that's the bottom of it? Nineteen souls gone because you thought — just thought only — that one of them was fooling you. And for a woman that



## THE SHORT STORY

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warn't worth Dan Spring's little finger. That's the truth, George Hoodley. But if you'd been brought up different, if you'd studied to understand the good side of people instead of the other side and how to get the best of them and to make money out of them and save it, you both might've come safe out of it. But you warn't that kind. 'Twarn't in your blood — nor in none of your people. Wrong's wrong — I got nothing to say about that — but human nature's human nature. Why should you expect, George Hoodley, to get the fine things in life? Why warn't you content with money? You'd earned that. What had you to offer a handsome young woman that liked a good time? What had you, even supposing she was the kind you could trust? Anything that women love? Not a blessed thing. You've spent your life with about one idea in your head, and that idea had nothing to do with being pleasant or kind to others, or good to anybody but yourself. Miles away from the kind of thing that women love were you all the time. You come to nigh fifty year of age — you with your hard face and hard mouth and eyes like — God, like a dead fish's eyes tonight, no less — don't you know that whoever was going to marry you warn't going to for love? You had a right to marry some lean old sour-mouthed spinster with a little money like yourself. What made you think that beauty and love was for you? But even in marrying you thought to make a good bargain — and got fooled. And by the daughter of a man of your own kind, too. D'y' s'pose her father didn't know? God help you, George Hoodley, 'twas him hooked you — 'twas him made the good bargain, not you. Why, before ever you married her 'twas common talk she warn't the

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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girl for any man to trust. But what good is it to talk of that now? Nineteen men gone, for I don't count you — you're no man. You're a — but I won't say it. Lord, but I'm tempted to choke you where you stand. Only when I think of those fine men — and poor Dan Spring — '

“ ‘ Dan Spring? Don't tell me 'twarn't Dan Spring, the — ’

“ ‘ Hold up, ’ I says to that — ‘ hold up, or close as we both are to death now and soon to go, I'll choke you where you stand — I'll send you to your God, or to the devil, with the print of my fingers around your turkey gobbler's throat, if you say aught of Dan — Dan was my own kind and I know him. Whatever faults he had — and maybe he had some — it warn't in the heart of Dan Spring to undervalue good women, or to mix with married women of any kind, let alone the wife of a man he was to go ship-mate with. No, sir, not if he didn't have a wife and children of his own — wife and children that'll have to suffer all their lives because of you, and they'll never know what brought it all about. But years from now they'll still be without food and clothing because of you. When I think of it, George Hoodley, I misdoubt they'd count it against me in the other world, where we'll both be soon with the others, if I was to take you by the throat and wind my fingers around your windpipe and choke and choke and squeeze and squeeze you till your tongue came out and your eyes popped and your face got blue and then black and you — ’

“ He drew back against the lockers and put his hands before his face. ‘ Martin, Martin, don't! ’ he said, for in truth I all but had hold of him in spite of myself.

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ ‘ I’m not going to,’ I said. ‘ I have enough already to account for. There’s two or three things I wish I hadn’t done, and maybe if I sent you to death a few minutes sooner than you’re going, I’d be sorry for it, too, later on. I’m going on deck now. This vessel won’t last much longer. She’s breaking as it is — and up to our chests in water here now.’ ”

“ Well, all the time we were below the big seas never let up. Some of her outside planks were working loose from their frames when I left him to go on deck again. Her deck planking, too, was coming apart. I almost fell through the opened-up deck into her hold when I was coming out of the forec’s’le. I didn’t know what to do quite, but climbed up on toward her bow at last, hanging on where I could, dodging seas and the loose bits of wreck they were carrying with them. At the knight-heads I looked around and ahead. Astern and to either side ’twas nothing but rocks and the white sea beating over them. Ahead I could make out a wall of rock — I guessed where I was — to the west’ard of Canso, off Whitehead. I knew that coast — and a bad coast it was. Up on the bowsprit, crawling out with the help of the foot-ropes and the stops hanging down and the wreck of the jib and stays, I began to think I had a chance — if I could only live till the daylight that was coming on. I climbed farther out. Hard work it was, and I soon cast off my boots. At the end of the bowsprit I got a better look. A dozen feet away was the ledge with a chance for a footing. If a man could jump that — but what man could — from a vessel’s bowsprit? But now and then, perhaps every minute or so, the bowsprit under a more than average big sea, lifted

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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and sagged a little nearer the cliff. At the right time a man might make the leap, I thought. But if he missed? I looked down with the thought and saw nothing but rocks and a white boiling below. 'If you miss, Martin,' I said to myself, 'maybe you'll live five seconds — maybe ten — but more likely maybe you'd keep clear of being mashed to jelly for just about a wink of your eye.' And 'twas enough to make a man wink his eyes just to look at the white boiling hell beneath. I cast off my oilskin jacket while I was thinking of it, and then my oil pants. After that went my jersey, flannel shirt and trousers. I meant to have a good try at it, anyway.

"Looking back before I should leap, who did I see but the skipper. In the noise of the sea I had not heard him. He, too, had cast off his boots and was even then unbuttoning his oilskins. He must've known I was watching him, for he said, 'Don't throw me off, Martin — don't.'

" 'Who's going to?' I asked.

" 'That's right — don't. Give me a chance now, Martin.'

" 'Like you gave your crew?'

" 'Oh, don't, Martin — don't! I was crazy. All that I said about not believing in God and hell — I didn't mean that. I'm afraid of it — afraid. I was always afraid of it, but never like now, Martin — never so afraid of the burning pit as now — never — never. Help me up, Martin — I'm weak — I can hardly stand. Help me, won't you, Martin? You're twice the man I am — no man ever sailed with me had your strength, Martin — help me, won't you, Martin?'

"I lifted him up, and the two of us clung to the end



## THE SHORT STORY

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of the bowsprit. He looked weak as water then and I pitied him, and pitying him I pointed out what chance we had. 'There's the cliff and there's what's below. It's one chance in ten to a man that can leap well.'

" 'I never could leap well, Martin.'

" 'No, you couldn't — nor do anything much that other boys could do — no money in leaping, I s'pose. But there it is — and you c'n have your choice. Will you jump first or last?'

" 'You go first, Martin. If you make it, maybe you c'n help me — maybe pass me a bit of line or something. See, I've got a bit of line I took along. You go first, Martin — you go first. It's an awful jump to take, though.'

" 'There's men of your crew took more awful jumps tonight, George Hoodley. They jumped from this world to the other when the spars went. Well, I'm going. Give me room to swing my arms. Now, if I miss, then I s'pose we'll be standing up and giving account together in a few minutes. I've got enough on my conscience, but I'm glad I'm not you. Stand clear of me now — when she lifts I'm going.'

" The *Cromwell* lifted. Her bowsprit rose up and up till the end of it was higher than the ledge in the wall of rock before us. I waited till the last little second — till the bowsprit swayed in toward the cliff, and then, while it balanced there, and before it started to settle again, knowing, as you all know, the power that's in the uplift of a sea, I gathered myself and jumped. And 'twas a good leap. I didn't think I could do it, cold and numb as I'd been feeling. A good leap — yes. And 'twas the wet, slippery shelf of rock I landed on, but I



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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went a yard clear, and even when I slipped a little I checked myself before I slipped back to the edge, and was safe. Well, I lay there till I felt my nerve steady again, then stood up and called for the line from the skipper.

“ ‘ Now, when you jump,’ I says, ‘ I’ll get what brace I can here, so if you slip on the edge same’s I did there’ll be a chance to save you. But mind you, George Hoodley, if I find I can’t hold you up — if it’s to be your life or mine — it’s you that’s got to go. Mind that. And hurry — throw it quick, or I’ll cast off the line altogether. That bowsprit won’t be there in a few minutes maybe. Hurry up.’ ”

“ ‘ But you’ll hang on, won’t you, Martin? You’ve got the strength if you want to use it.’ ”

“ ‘ Jump, man, jump afore you lose your nerve entirely,’ I hollers.

“ He threw the line to me, after taking one end of it around his waist. The other end I took around my waist, my end half hitched so I could slip it in a hurry. I warn’t throwing my life away for him if I knew it.

“ Well, he jumped at last. And the bowsprit rose full as high and gave him full as good a chance as I’d got. But even so he fell a little short. His feet only caught the edge of the shelf. He staggered, and seeing how it was, I braced my feet well as I could and hauled. He came in, sagged away, I bracing my feet — they were slipping — in a crack in the rock of the ledge, I dug the fingers of one hand, the other hand to the line, and hung on. We were gaining, he was fairly on his feet, and I felt the strain easing, when a sea that swept up the side of the cliff like a tidal wave took him clear of every-

## THE SHORT STORY

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thing. It would have swept me, too, but I gripped where I could get a hold with the fingers of my one loose hand in the crack in the rocks and hung on there — one hand to the crack and the other to the line — hung on so, supporting the weight of myself and the skipper until I felt my muscles getting hot and heavy and my breath coming fast. He was floundering somewhere on the edge of the cliff. I hollered to him, though feeling almost certain he was battered to pieces by then — ‘How is it with you, George — how is it, Man?’ but there was no answer. Again I hollered, and again no answer. And then, when I was satisfied that it was only the last ounce of strength I had left, I called out, ‘Help yourself, George — why don’t you help yourself?’ No answer. Once more I called, and once more getting no answer, I knew then he must’ve been beaten to death against the rocks, and that ’twas his dead weight was hanging to me. And yet I called once more to make sure. But still getting no answer, ‘The Lord have mercy on your soul, George Hoodley,’ I said, and let slip the line.”

Toward the end of Martin’s story it had become very quiet in the forec’s’le. Nobody said anything, neither broke in with a question nor offered any comment, until after a long silence, and then not until after Martin himself had repeated absently, as if to himself, and after a long indrawn breath, “And then I let slip the line,” and only then did he look around and seem to realize that he was not on the ledge off Whitehead.

“And after you cast off the line — what then, Martin?”

“Well,” resumed Martin, “the weight being gone

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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made a great difference to me, but it was quite a while before I could stand on my feet. Even then I didn't have the courage to look down right away, but climbing to one side to the very top of the cliff, I laid flat on my stomach and looked over the edge. 'Twas good light then, and I could see the body of George Hoodley below — tossing about like an eggshell, as if 'twas no more than sea-weed in a sea-way. And that was the end of it. Even if he warn't dead at the time — even if he warn't dead when I let go the line, and it had to be me or him, it ought to've been him. If it was a friend now — if it was Dan, say — I don't know what I would do. I hope I'd have the strength not to cast loose the line."

It was very quiet again. The boot-heels of the new watch on deck, the rasping of the booms as the vessel jibed, the whistle of the rising gale, the slap of the sea outside them, the skipper's voice on deck — the atmosphere stirred Martin again. " 'Twas a night like this we swung the *Cromwell* off to the west'ard. I shouldn't wonder but what he'd be takin' the mains'l off her soon, won't he? " — this to the old watch, who had just come down the companion-way and was wringing his mitts out by the stove.

" The mains'l, Martin? " repeated the watch in surprise. " Why, the mains'l's been off her for hours — she's under a trys'l and jumbo."

" The mains'l, Martin," explained one, " was taken off her just after you and Johnnie were taken aboard. You were pretty tired and didn't notice maybe at the time."

" Lord, I must've been tired — not to know it when the mains'l's taken off a vessel I'm in. There was never

## THE SHORT STORY

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a minute the night the *Cromwell* was lost that I was as tired as that. No, sir, not even when I laid on the cliff in the morning and looked down for George Hoodley's body."

" 'Speakin' of that, Martin — didn't some of the bodies come ashore? ' " This from the cook, who, incidentally, feeling a little less hurried, was putting a few shovels of coal into the stove before he should turn in for the night.

" There were two bodies came ashore, " resumed Martin. " And that was a sad thing, too. I was going up to see if I couldn't get some clothes to hide my nakedness and maybe a pair of boots and a bite to eat and a bit of fire to warm up by somewhere, when I met a man. 'Twas good light by then. He was coming down a bit of beach behind the cliff. I told him my vessel had been wrecked and I was all that was left of the crew. And he fixed me up as well as he could and came back with me to the beach, and there's where the sad part came in. One of the *Cromwell's* crew, Angus MacPherson, had been fishing out of Gloucester twelve years, and every fall he said he was going home to see the old people. I knew that as well as I knew that he'd been sending money home regularly to the old people. If it hadn't been for Angus they'd had a hard time of it, I callate, those twelve years. Well, he never went home as he said, but here was the very place Angus came from and this was the way he came home at last. That same afternoon I helped to bury him and to carry his old mother away from the grave when she couldn't carry herself. God help us, but there's hard spots in life, ain't there? "

" The other body that came up was the skipper's. "



## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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And him I went to Gloucester with. And maybe there'd be no more to that, but getting into the Gloucester station, just as the train hauled up, who should happen to be at the station but the skipper's wife — his widow, then, of course. She knew well enough what had happened — everybody in Gloucester knew — the papers full of it the day before — but she didn't know that I, the one man saved from the wreck, was on the train. Nobody knew — I didn't send any word ahead. But it was only three days since the vessel was lost, but was she crying her eyes out? Was she? — the — the — but I won't say it.

"I goes up to her. 'Mrs. Hoodley,' says I, 'I've brought home your husband's body for burial.'

"D'y' think she thanked me? Indeed! I saw by her face I'd made a mistake not to bury him with Angus down Whitehead way. And then she makes eyes at me. God's truth. Makes eyes at me, while the box that her husband's corpse was in — and I knew what a battered, bloody corpse it was — was being lifted out of the baggage car and put into a wagon. She gave orders then and there to have it taken straight to the grave-yard, and when it was buried, mind you, she warn't there — not even for decency's sake. But going from the station while her husband's body was being carried away, she held her head up and took note of who was looking at her. That's what she liked — people to notice her. And looking at her I cursed George Hoodley for a fool that didn't drown her if he was bound to drown somebody, instead of the man that he thought had wronged him. So there you have it — the truth of the *Oliver Cromwell* — the part that didn't get into the papers."



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ What was it the papers did say about it, Martin? ”

“ Oh, what they said was pretty near right so far as it went, but they didn't know the whole truth — and don't yet. They said a word or two 'bout his leaving a wife. No great harm done in that, I s'pose. As for himself, they said he was thrifty, and hard-working, and careful — gen'rally careful, they might've said — and successful. And so he was, I s'pose. But I think I'll be turning in, for after all there's nothing like a good sleep, is there? Where's Johnnie? Still asleep? Well, he's the wise lad to be getting his good sleep 'stead of listening to my long-winded stories. Maybe if we all turned in there'd be more of us good and strong to haul a trawl again tomorrow.” He picked up his pipe. It was cold.

“ And now there's something. The man that'd invent something to keep a pipe going when you lay it down without smokin' itself all up'd make a lot of money, wouldn't he? And yet maybe it's just as well for some of us. I callate I've smoked enough, anyway.”

“ But, Martin, before you turn in, what's become of Hoodley's widow? ”

“ Oh, her? She and Dan Powell got married since, and they're both getting all that's coming to them. He'll go out and get lost some day, too, maybe, to get away from her. I wouldn't be surprised anyway if he did. Only before he goes, being a different kind of a man from George Hoodley and knowing women of her kind better, he won't worry so much about the man as about her. He'll see that she's put out of the way before he sails — or at least that's my idea of it — or maybe it's only that I half hope he will. But I think I'll be turning in.”

## THE TRUTH OF THE OLIVER CROMWELL

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He tucked his pipe away under his mattress, slipped out of his slip-shods, slacked away his suspenders and laid his length in his bunk. He was about to draw the curtain, but his eye catching the eye of the watch, who was then hauling off his wet boots, he had to ask, "What's it look like for the morning, Stevie — what'd the skipper say?"

"He says that unless it moderates a bit more than it looks as if 'twill now, we'll stay aboard in the morning."

"Well, here's one that ain't sorry to hear that. I don't mind sayin' now that it's all over, that hanging on to the bottom of that dory warn't any joke today. I'm good and tired. 'Twas a night like this we headed the *Cromwell* to the west'ard. 'Hell or Gloucester,' says he, and it warn't Gloucester. Good-night."

### STUDY NOTES

This story is the longest in the book. What reason can you find in the treatment of the characters to make the story long? In the management of background? Does the following statement of the author explain the structure of the story and make it clear why he was so long in getting to the real story of the *Cromwell*?

"In telling this story, based on an actual occurrence, I was almost as much interested in portraying fishing life and showing the manner of man the narrator, Martin Carr, was, and what was doing in that forec's'le while Martin Carr was talking, as in narrating the fact itself."

Would the story have seemed true to the characters "in that forec's'le" if the author had let it begin abruptly with the *Cromwell* account and end when that was told?

## THE SHORT STORY

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The reader accustomed to swift narrative, rapidly disposing of the enveloping incidents and reaching the initial incident, will wonder why Mr. Connolly is so deliberate — why one sixth of his story is gone before the story of the *Oliver Cromwell* begins. Is there a legitimate excuse in this case for such deliberation? Would the story be better if stripped of its enveloping action — the capsizing of Martin's dory and the rescue? Give reasons for your answers.

In applying the time scheme to this story, do not confuse the time of the telling by Martin with the time of the real story, which is the wrecking of the *Cromwell*. The time should be reckoned from the initial incident — the shipping of Martin and Dan Spring as fishermen on the fatal trip — to the culmination in the wreck.

Would the story have been stronger and more real if it had closed with “ ‘ The Lord have mercy on your soul, George Hoodley,’ I said, and let slip the line.” Or is it best as it is, trailing off to a conclusion in the general conversation of the men?

## SAMUEL \*

By Jack London

Jack London (1876- ) is a native of California. He was born in San Francisco, educated in the University of California and lives in California at present. The material for his novels and stories is drawn largely from first hand experience with life. As a novelist he is best known through *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sea Wolf*, and *Martin Eden*. Many of his stories do not conform technically to the requirements of the Short Story, but are tales or pictures of life so convincingly drawn as to compel attention to the phases of life they illustrate.

Margaret Henan would have been a striking figure under any circumstances, but never more so than when I first chanced upon her, a sack of grain fully a hundred-weight on her shoulder, as she walked with sure though tottering stride from the cart-tail to the stable, pausing for an instant to gather strength at the foot of the steep steps that led to the grain-bin. There were four of these steps, and she went up them, a step at a time, slowly, unwaveringly, and with so dogged a certitude that it never entered my mind that her strength could fail her and let that hundred-weight sack fall from the lean and withered frame that well-nigh doubled under it. For she was patently an old woman, and it was her age that made me linger by the cart and watch.

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## THE SHORT STORY

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Six times she went between the cart and the stable, each time with a full sack on her back, and beyond passing the time of day with me she took no notice of my presence. Then, the cart empty, she fumbled for matches and lighted a short clay pipe, pressing down the burning surface of the tobacco with a calloused and apparently nerveless thumb. The hands were noteworthy. They were large-knuckled, sinewy, and malformed by labor, rimed with callouses, the nails blunt and broken, and with here and there cuts and bruises, healed and healing, such as are common to the hands of hard-working men. On the back were huge, upstanding veins, eloquent of age and toil. Looking at them it was hard to believe that they were the hands of the woman who had once been the belle of Island McGill. This last, of course, I learned later. At the time I knew neither her history nor her identity.

She wore heavy man's brogans. Her legs were stock-  
ingless, and I had noticed when she walked that her bare feet were thrust into the crinkly, iron-like shoes that sloshed about her lean ankles at every step. Her figure, shapeless and waistless, was garbed in a rough man's shirt and in a ragged flannel petticoat that had once been red. But it was her face, wrinkled, withered and weather-beaten, surrounded by an aureole of unkept and straggling wisps of grayish hair, that caught and held me. Neither drifted hair nor serried wrinkles could hide the splendid dome of a forehead, high and broad without verging in the slightest on the abnormal.

The sunken cheeks and pinched nose told little of the quality of the life that flickered behind those clear blue eyes of hers. Despite the minutiae of wrinkle-work that



somehow failed to weazen them, her eyes were clear as a girl's — clear, out-looking, and far-seeing, and with an open and unblinking steadfastness of gaze that was disconcerting. The remarkable thing was the distance between them. It is a lucky man or woman who has the width of an eye between, but with Margaret Henan the width between her eyes was fully that of an eye and a half. Yet so symmetrically molded was her face that this remarkable feature produced no uncanny effect, and, for that matter, would have escaped the casual observer's notice. The mouth, shapeless and toothless, with down-turned corners and lips dry and parchment-like, nevertheless lacked the muscular slackness so usual with age. The lips might have been those of a mummy, save for the impression of rigid firmness they gave. Not that they were atrophied. On the contrary they seemed tense and set with a muscular and spiritual determination. There and in the eyes was the secret of the certitude with which she carried the sacks up the steep steps, with never a false step or over-balance, and emptied them in the grain-bin.

“ You are an old woman to be working like this,” I ventured.

She looked at me with that strange, unblinking gaze, and she thought and spoke with the slow deliberateness that characterized everything about her, as if well aware of an eternity that was hers and in which there was no need for haste. Again I was impressed by the enormous certitude of her. In this eternity that seemed so undubitably hers, there was time and to spare for safe-footing and stable equilibrium — for certitude, in short. No more in her spiritual life than in carrying the

## THE SHORT STORY

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hundred-weights of grain, was there a possibility of a misstep or an overbalancing. The feeling produced in me was uncanny. Here was a human soul that, save for the most glimmering of contacts, was beyond the humanness of me. And the more I learned of Margaret Henan in the weeks that followed the more mysteriously remote she became. She was as alien as a far-journeyer from some other star, and no hint could she nor all the countryside give me of what forms of living, what heats of feeling, or rules of philosophic contemplation, actuated her in all that she had been and was.

"I wull be suvunty-two come Guid Friday a fortnight," she said in reply to my question.

"But you are an old woman to be doing this man's work, and a strong man's work at that," I insisted.

Again she seemed to immerse herself in that atmosphere of contemplative eternity, and so strangely did it affect me that I should not have been surprised to have awaked a century or so later and found her just beginning to enunciate her reply:

"The work hoz tull be done, an' I am beholden tull no one."

"But have you no children, no family relations?"

"O, ay, a plenty o' them, but they no see fut to be helpun' me."

She drew out her pipe for a moment, then added, with a nod of her head toward the house, "I luv' with me-self."

I glanced at the house, straw thatched and commodious, at the large stable, and at the large array of fields I knew must belong with the place.

"It is a big bit of land for you to farm by yourself."

## SAMUEL

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“ O, ay, a bug bit, suvunty acres. Ut kept me old mon buzzy, along with a son an’ a hired mon, tull say nought o’ extra honds un the harvest an’ a maid-servant un the house.”

She clambered into the cart, gathered the reins in her hands, and quizzed me with her keen shrewd eyes.

“ Belike ye hail from over the watter — Ameruky, I’m meanun’? ”

“ Yes, I’m a Yankee,” I answered.

“ Ye wull no be findun’ mony Island McGill folk stoppun’ un Ameruky? ”

“ No; I don’t remember ever meeting one in the States.”

She nodded her head.

“ They are home-lovun’ bodies, though I wull no be sayun’ they are no fair-traveled. Yet they come home ot the last, them oz are no lost ot sea or kult by fevers an’ such-like un foreign parts.”

“ Then your sons will have gone to sea and come home again? ” I queried.

“ O, ay, all savun’ Samuel oz was drowned.”

At the mention of Samuel I could have sworn to a strange light in her eyes, and it seemed to me, as by some telepathic flash, that I divined in her a tremendous wistfulness, an immense yearning. It seemed to me that here was the key to her inscrutableness, the clew that if followed properly would make all her strangeness plain. It came to me that here was a contact and that for the moment I was glimpsing into the soul of her. The question was tickling on my tongue, but she forestalled me.

She *tckh’d* to the horse, and with a “ Guid day tull you, sir,” drove off.

## THE SHORT STORY

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A simple, homely people are the folk of Island McGill, and I doubt if a more sober, thrifty, and industrious folk is to be found in all the world. Meeting them abroad — and to meet them abroad one must meet them on the sea, for a hybrid seafaring and farmer breed are they — one would never take them to be Irish. Irish they claim to be, speaking of North of Ireland with pride and sneering at their Scottish brothers; yet Scotch they undoubtedly are, transplanted Scotch of long ago, it is true, but none the less Scotch, with a thousand traits, to say nothing of their tricks of speech and woolly utterance, which nothing less than their Scotch clannishness could have preserved to this late day.

A narrow loch, scarcely half a mile wide, separates Island McGill from the main land of Ireland; and once across this loch, one finds himself in an entirely different country. The Scotch impression is strong, and the people, to commence with, are Presbyterians. When it is considered that there is no public house in all the island and that seven thousand souls dwell therein, some idea may be gained of the temperateness of the community. Wedded to old ways, public opinion and the ministers are powerful influences, while fathers and mothers are revered and obeyed as in few other places in this modern world. Courting lasts never later than ten at night, and no girl walks out with her young man without her parents' knowledge and consent.

The young men go down to the sea and sow their wild oats in the wicked ports, returning periodically, between voyages, to live the old intensive morality, to court till ten o'clock, to sit under the minister each Sunday, and to listen at home to the same stern precepts that the elders

preached to them from the time they were laddies. Much they learned of women in the ends of the earth, these seafaring sons, yet a canny wisdom was theirs and they never brought wives home with them. The one solitary exception to this had been the schoolmaster, who had been guilty of bringing a wife from half a mile the other side of the loch. For this he had never been forgiven, and he rested under a cloud for the remainder of his days. At his death the wife went back across the loch to her own people, and the blot on the escutcheon of Island McGill was erased. In the end the sailor-men married girls of their own homeland and settled down to become exemplars of all the virtues for which the island was noted.

Island McGill was without a history. She boasted none of the events that go to make history. There had never been any wearing of the green, any Fenian conspiracies, any land disturbances. There had been but one eviction, and that purely technical — a test case, and on advice of the tenant's lawyer. So Island McGill was without annals. History had passed her by. She paid her taxes, acknowledged her crowned rulers, and left the world alone; all she asked in return was that the world leave her alone. The world was composed of two parts — Island McGill and the rest of it. And whatever was not Island McGill was outlandish and barbarian; and well she knew, for did not her seafaring sons bring home reports of that world and its ungodly ways?

It was from the skipper of a Glasgow tramp, as passenger from Colombo to Rangoon, that I had first learned of the existence of Island McGill; and it was from him



## THE SHORT STORY

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that I had carried the letter that gave me entrance to the house of Mrs. Ross, widow of a master mariner, with a daughter living with her and with two sons, master mariners themselves and out upon the sea. Mrs. Ross did not take in boarders, and it was Captain Ross's letter alone that had enabled me to get from her, bed and board. In the evening after my encounter with Margaret Henan, I questioned Mrs. Ross, and I knew on the instant that I had in truth stumbled upon mystery.

Like all Island McGill folk, as I was soon to discover, Mrs. Ross was at first averse to discussing Margaret Henan at all. Yet it was from her I learned that evening that Margaret Henan had once been one of the island belles. Herself the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, she had married Thomas Henan, equally well-to-do. Beyond the usual housewife's tasks she had never been accustomed to work. Unlike many of the island women, she had never lent a hand in the fields.

"But what of her children?" I asked.

"Two o' the sons, Jamie an' Tumothy uz married an' be gown' tull sea. Thot bug house close tull the post office uz Jamie's. The daughters thot ha'no married be luvun' wuth them as dud marry. An' the rest be dead."

"The Samuels," Clara interpolated, with what I suspected was a giggle.

She was Mrs. Ross's daughter, a strapping young woman with handsome features and remarkably handsome black eyes.

"'Tuz naught tull be snuckerun' ot," her mother reproved her.

"The Samuels?" I intervened. "I don't understand."

" Her four sons thot died."

" And were they all named Samuel? "

" Ay."

" Strange," I commented in the lagging silence.

" Very strange," Mrs. Ross affirmed, proceeding stolidly with the knitting of the woolen singlet on her knees — one of the countless undergarments that she interminably knitted for her skipper sons.

" And it was only the Samuels that died? " I queried, in further attempt.

" The others luv'd," was the answer.

" A fine fomuly — no finer on the island. No better lods ever sailed out of Island McGill. The munuster held them up oz models tull pottern after. Nor was ever a whusper breathed again' the girls."

" But why is she left alone now in her old age? " I persisted, " Why don't her own flesh and blood look after her? Why does she live alone? Don't they ever go to see her or care for her? "

" Never a one un twunty years an' more now. She fetch't ut ontull herself. She drove them from the house just oz she drove old Tom Henan, thot was her husband, tull hus death."

" Drink? " I ventured.

Mrs. Ross shook her head scornfully, as if drink was a weakness beneath the weakest of Island McGill.

A long pause followed, during which Mrs. Ross knitted stolidly on, only nodding permission when Clara's young man, mate on one of the Shire Line sailing ships, came to walk out with her. I studied the half-dozen ostrich eggs, hanging in the corner against the wall like a cluster of some monstrous fruit. On each shell was

## THE SHORT STORY

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painted precipitous and impossible seas through which full-rigged ships foamed with a lack of perspective only equaled by their sharp technical perfection. On the mantelpiece stood two large pearl shells, obviously a pair, intricately carved by the patient hands of New Caledonian convicts. In the center of the mantel was a stuffed bird of paradise, while about the room were scattered gorgeous shells from the Southern seas, delicate sprays of coral sprouting from barnacled *pi-pi* shells and cased in glass, assegais from South Africa, stone-axes from New Guinea, huge Alaskan tobacco-pouches beaded with heraldic totem designs, a boomerang from Australia, divers ships in glass bottles, a cannibal *kai-kai* bowl from the Marquesas, and fragile cabinets from China and the Indies, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and precious woods.

I gazed at this varied trove brought home by sailor sons, and pondered the mystery of Margaret Henan who had driven her husband to his death and been forsaken by all her kin. It was not the drink. Then what was it? — some shocking cruelty? some amazing infidelity? or some fearful, old-world peasant crime?

I broached my theories, but to all Mrs. Ross shook her head.

“ Ut was no thot,” she said. “ Margaret was a guid wife an’ a guid mother, an’ I doubt she would harm a fly. She brought up her fomuly God-fearun’ an’ decent-minded. Her trouble was thot she took lunatuc — turned eediot.”

Mrs. Ross tapped significantly on her forehead to indicate a state of addlement.

“ But I talked with her this afternoon,” I objected,

## SAMUEL

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“and I found her a sensible woman — remarkably bright for one of her years.”

“Ay, an’ I’m grantun’ all thot you say,” she went on calmly. “But I am no referrun’ tull thot. I am referrun’ tull her wucked-headed an’ vucious stubbornness. No more stubborn woman ever luv’d than Margaret Henan. Ut was all on account o’ Samuel, which was the name o’ her eldest an’ they do say her favorut brother — hum oz died by hus own hond all through the munuster’s mustake un’ no registerun’ the new church ot Dublin. Ut was a lesson thot the name was musfortunate, but she would no take ut, an’ there was talk when she called her first child Samuel — hum thot died o’ the croup. An’ wuth thot what does she do but call the next one Samuel, an’ hum only three when he fell un tull the tub o’ hot watter an’ was plain cooked tull death. Ut all come, I tell you, o’ her wucked-headed an’ foolush stubbornness. For a Samuel she must huv; an’ ut was the death of the four of her sons. After the first, dudna her own mother go down un the dirt tull her feet, a-beggun’ an’ pleadun’ wuth her no tull name her next one Samuel? But she was no tull be turned from her purpose. Margaret Henan was always set un her ways, an’ never more so thon on thot name Samuel.

“She was fair lunatue on Samuel. Dudna her neighbors, an’ all kuth an’ kun savun’ them thot luv’d un the house wuth her, get up an’ walk out ot the christen-un’ of the second — hum thot was cooked? Thot they dud, an’ ot the very moment the munuster asked what would the bairn’s name be. ‘Samuel,’ says she; an’ wuth thot they got up an’ walked out an’ left the house. An’ ot the door dudna her Aunt Fanny, her mother’s



## THE SHORT STORY

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suster, turn an' say loud for all tull hear: 'What for wull she be wantun' tull murder the wee thung?' The munuster heard fine, and dudna like ut, but oz he told my Larry afterward, what could he do? Ut was the woman's wush, an' there was no law again' a mother callun' her child accordun' tull her wush.

"And then was there no' the third Samuel? An' when he was lost ot sea off the Cape, dudna she break all laws o' nature tull have a fourth? She was forty-seven I'm tullun ye, an' she hod a child ot forty-seven. Thunk on ut! At forty-seven! Ut was fair scand'lous."

From Clara, next morning, I got the tale of Margaret Henan's favorite brother; and from here and there, in the week that followed, I pieced together the tragedy of Margaret Henan. Samuel Dundee had been the youngest of Margaret's four brothers, and, as Clara told me, she had well-nigh worshiped him. He was going to sea at the time, the skipper of one of the sailing ships of the Bank Line, when he married Agnes Hewitt. She was described as a slender wisp of a girl, delicately featured and with a nervous organization of the super-sensitive order. Theirs had been the first marriage in the "new" church, and after a two weeks' honeymoon Samuel had kissed his bride good-by and sailed in command of the *Loughbank*, a big four-masted bark.

And it was because of the "new" church that the minister's blunder occurred. Nor was it the blunder of the minister alone, as one of the elders later explained; for it was equally the blunder of the whole Presbytery of Coughleen, which included fifteen churches on Island McGill and the mainland. The old church, beyond



repair, had been torn down and the new one built on the original foundation. Looking upon the foundation stones as similar to a ship's keel, it never entered the minister's nor the Presbytery's head that the new church was legally any other than the old church.

"An' three couples was married the first week un the new church," Clara said. "First of all, Samuel Dundee an' Agnes Hewitt; the next day Albert Mahan an' Minnie Duncan; an' by the week-end Eddie Troy an' Flo Mackintosh — all sailor men, an' un sux weeks' time the last of them back tull their shups an' awa', an' no one o' them dreamun' of the wuckedness they'd been ot."

The Imp of the Perverse must have chuckled at the situation. All things favored. The marriages had taken place in the first week of May, and it was not till three months later that the minister, as required by law, made his quarterly report to the civil authorities in Dublin. Promptly came back the announcement that his church had no legal existence, not being registered according to the law's demands. This was overcome by prompt registration; but the marriages were not to be so easily remedied. The three sailor husbands were away, and their wives, in short, were not their wives.

"But the munuster was no for alarmun' the bodies," said Clara. "He kept hus council an' bided hus time, waitun' for the lods tull be back from sea. Oz luck would have ut, he was away across the island tull a christenun' when Albert Mahan arrives home onexpected, hus shup just docked ot Dublin. Ut's nine o'clock ot night when the munuster, un hus slippers an' dressun' gown, gets the news. Up he jumps an' calls for horse

## THE SHORT STORY

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an' saddle, an' awa' goes like the wund for Albert Mahan's. Albert uz just gown' tull bed an' hoz one shoe off when the munuster arrives.

" 'Come wuth me, the pair o'ye,' says he, breathless like. 'What for, an' me dead weary an' gown' tull bed?' says Albert. 'Tull be lawful married,' says the munuster. Albert looks black an' says, 'Now, munuster, ye wull be jokin'.' But tull himself, oz I've heard hum tell mony a time, he was wonderun' thot the munuster should a-took tull whusky ot hus time o' life.

" 'We be no married?' says Minnie. He shook hus head. 'An' I om no Mussus Mahan?' 'No,' says he, 'ye are no Mussus Mahan. Ye are plain Muss Duncan.' 'But ye married us yoursel',' says she. 'I dud an' I dudna',' says he. An' wuth thot he tells them the whole upshot, an' Albert puts on hus shoe, an' they go wuth the munuster an' are married proper an' lawful, an' oz Albert Mahan says afterward mony's the time, ' 'Tus no every mon thot hos two weddun' nights on Island McGill.' "

Six months later, Eddie Troy came home and was promptly remarried. But Samuel Dundee was away on a three year's voyage and his ship fell overdue. Further to complicate the situation, a baby boy, past two years old, was waiting for him in the arms of his wife. The months passed, and the wife grew thin with worrying. "Ut's no meself I'm thinkun' on," she is reported to have said many times, "but ut's the puir fatherless bairn. Uf aught hopped tull Samuel where wull the bairn stond? "

Lloyds posted the *Loughbank* as missing, and the owners ceased the monthly remittance of Samuel's half-

## SAMUEL

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pay to his wife. It was the question of the child's legitimacy that prayed on her mind, and when all hope of Samuel's return was abandoned, she drowned herself and the child in the loch. And here enters the greater tragedy. The *Loughbank* was not lost. By a series of sea disasters and delays too interminable to relate, she had made one of those long, unsighted passages such as occur once or twice in half a century. How the Imp must have held both his sides! Back from the sea came Samuel, and when they broke the news to him something else broke somewhere in his heart or head. Next morning they found him where he had tried to kill himself across the grave of his wife and child. Never in the history of Island McGill was there so fearful a death-bed. He spat in the minister's face and reviled him, and died blaspheming so terribly that those that tended on him did so with averted gaze and trembling hands.

And in the face of all this, Margaret Henan named her first child Samuel.

How account for the woman's stubbornness? Or was it a morbid obsession that demanded a child of hers should be named Samuel? Her third child was a girl, named after herself, and the fourth was a boy again. Despite the strokes of fate that had already bereft her, and despite the loss of friends and relatives, she persisted in her resolve to name the child after her brother. She was shunned at church by those who had grown up with her. Her mother, after a final appeal, left her house with the warning that if the child were so named she would never speak to her again. And though the old lady lived thirty odd years longer, she kept her word.

## THE SHORT STORY

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The minister agreed to christen the child any name but Samuel, and every other minister on Island McGill refused to christen it by the name she had chosen. There was talk on the part of Margaret Henan of going to law at the time, but in the end she carried the child to Belfast and there had it christened Samuel.

And then nothing happened. The whole Island was confuted. The boy grew and prospered. The schoolmaster never ceased averring that it was the brightest lad he had ever seen. Samuel had a splendid constitution, a tremendous grip on life. To everybody's amazement he escaped the usual run of childish afflictions. Measles, whooping-cough and mumps knew him not. He was armor clad against germs, immune to all diseases. Headaches and earaches were things unknown. "Never so much oz a boil or a pumple," as one of the old bodies told me, ever marred his healthy skin. He broke school records in scholarship and athletics, and whipped every boy of his size or years on Island McGill.

It was a triumph for Margaret Henan. This paragon was hers, and it bore the cherished name. With the one exception of her mother, friends and relatives drifted back and acknowledged that they had been mistaken; though there were old crones who still abided by their opinions and who shook their heads ominously over their cups of tea. The boy was too wonderful to last. There was no escaping the curse of the name his mother had wickedly laid upon him. The young generation joined Margaret Henan in laughing at them, but the old crones continued to shake their heads.

Other children followed. Margaret Henan's fifth was a boy, whom she called Jamie, and in rapid succession



## SAMUEL

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followed three girls, Alice, Sara, and Nora, the boy Timothy, and two more girls, Florence and Katie. Katie was the last and eleventh and Margaret Henan, at thirty-five, ceased from her exertions. She had done well by Island McGill and the Queen. Nine healthy children were hers. All prospered. It seemed her ill luck had shot its bolt with the deaths of her first two. Nine lived, and one of them was named Samuel.

Jamie elected to follow the sea, though it was not so much a matter of election as compulsion, for the eldest sons on Island McGill remained on the land while all the other sons went to the salt ploughing. Timothy followed Jamie, and by the time the latter had got his first command, a steamer in the Bay trade out of Cardiff, Timothy was mate of a big sailing ship. Samuel, however, did not take kindly to the soil. The farmer's life had no attraction for him. His brothers went to sea, not out of desire, but because it was the only way for them to gain their bread; and he who had no need to go envied them when, returned from far voyages, they sat by the kitchen fire and told their bold tales of the wonder lands beyond the sea rim.

Samuel became a teacher, much to his father's disgust, and even took extra certificates, going to Belfast for his examinations. When the old master retired, Samuel took over his school. Secretly, however, he studied navigation, and it was Margaret's delight when he sat by the kitchen fire, and, despite their master's tickets, tangled up his brothers in the theoretics of their profession. Tom Henan alone was outraged when Samuel, school-teacher, gentleman, and heir to the Henan farm, shipped to sea before the mast. Margaret had an abiding faith in her



## THE SHORT STORY

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son's star, and whatever he did she was sure was for the best. Like everything else connected with his glorious personality, there had never been known so swift a rise as in the case of Samuel. Barely with two years' sea experience before the mast, he was taken from the fore-castle and made a provisional second mate. This occurred in a fever port on the West Coast, and the committee of skippers that examined him agreed that he knew more of the science of navigation than they had remembered or forgotten. Two years later he sailed from Liverpool, mate of the *Starry Grace*, with both master's and extra master's tickets in his possession. And then it happened — the thing the old crones had been shaking their heads over for years.

It was told me by Gavin McNab, bosun of the *Starry Grace* at the time, himself an Island McGill man.

"Wull do I remember ut," he said. "We was run-nun' our Eastun' down, an' makun' heavy weather of ut. Oz fine a sailor-mon oz ever walked was Samuel Henan. I remember the look of hum wull that last marnun', a-watchun' them bug seas curlun' up astern, an' a-watch-un' the old girl an seeun' how she took them — the skupper down below an' drunkun' for days. Ut was ot seven thot Henan brought her up on tull the wund, not darun' tull run longer un thot fearful sea. Ot eight, after havun' breakfast, he turns un, an' a half hour after up comes the skupper, bleary-eyed an' shaky an' holdun' on tull the componion. Ut was fair smokun', I om tellun' ye, and there he stood, blunkun' an' noddun' an' talkun' tull humsel'. 'Keep off,' says he ot last to the mon ot the wheel. 'My God!' says the second mate,

## SAMUEL

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standun' beside hum. The skupper never looks tull hum ot all, but keeps on mutterun' an' jabberun' tull humsel'. All of a suddent-like he straightuns up an' throws hus head back, an' says: 'Put your wheel over, me mon — now, domn ye! Are ye deef thot ye'll no be hearun' me!'

“ Ut was a drunkun mon's luck, for the *Starry Grace* wore off afore that God-Almighty gale wuthout shuppun' a bucket o' watter, the second mate shoutun' orders an' the crew jumpin' like mod. An' wuth thot the skupper nods contented-like tull humsel' an' goes below after more whuskey. Ut was plain murder o' the lives o' all of us, for ut was no the time for the buggest shup afloat tull be runnun'. Run? Never hov I seen the like! Ut was beyond all thunkun', an' me goun' tull sea, boy an' mon, for forty year. I tell you ut was fair awesome.

“ The face o' the second mate was white oz death, an' he stood ut alone for half an hour, when ut was too much for hum an' he went below an' called Samuel an' the third. Ay, a fine sailor-mon thot Samuel, but ut was too much for hum. He looked an' studied, an' looked an' studied, but he could no see hus way. He durst na heave tull. She would ha' been sweeput o' all honds an' stucks an' everythung afore she could a-fetcht up. There was nought tull do but keep on runnun'. An' uf ut worsened we were lost anyway, for soon or late that overtakun' sea was sure tull sweep us clear over poop an' all.

“ Dud I say it was a God-Almighty gale? Ut was worse nor thot. The Devil himself must ha' hod a hond un the brewun' o' ut, ut was thot fearsome. I ha' looked on some sights, but I om no carun' tull look on the like

## THE SHORT STORY

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o' thot again. No mon dared tull be un hus bunk. No, nor no mon on the decks. All honds of us stood on top the house an' held on an' watched. The three mates was on the poop, wuth two men ot the wheel, an' the only mon below was thot whuskey-blighted captain snorun' drunk.

“ An' then I see ut comun', a mile away, risun' above all the waves like an island un the sea — the biggest wave ever I looked upon. The three mates stood tulgether an' watched ut comun', a-prayun' like we thot she would no break un passun' us. But ut was no tull be. Ot the last, when she rose up like a mountain, curlun' above the stern an' blottun' out the sky, the mates scottered, the second an' third runnun' for the mizzen-shrouds an' climbun' up, but the first runnun' tull the wheel tull lend a hond. He was a grave mon, thot Samuel Henan. He run straight un tull the face o' thot father o' all waves, no thunkun' on humsel' but thunkun' only o' the ship. The two men was lashed tull the wheel, but he would be ready tull hond un the case they was kult. An' then she took ut. We on the house could no see the poop for the thousand tons of watter that had hut ut. Thot wave cleaned them out, took everything along wuth ut — the two mates climbun' up the mizzun-riggun', Samuel Henan runnun' tull the wheel, the two men ot the wheel, ay, an' the wheel utself. We never saw aught o' them, for she broached tull what o' the wheel goun', an' two men o' us was drowned off the house, no tull mention the carpenter thot we picked up ot the break o' the poop wuth every bone o' hus body broke tull he was like so much jelly.”

And here enters the marvel of it, the miraculous

wonder of that woman's heroic spirit. Margaret Henan was forty-seven when the news came home of the loss of Samuel; and it was not long after that the unbelievable rumor went around Island McGill. I say unbelievable. Island McGill would not believe. Dr. Hall pooh-pooh'd it. Everybody laughed at it as a good joke. They traced back the gossip to Sara Dack, servant to the Henans', and who alone lived with Margaret and her husband. But Sara Dack persisted in her assertion and was called a low-mouthed liar. One or two dared question Tom Henan himself, but beyond black looks and curses for their presumption they elicited nothing from him.

The rumor died down, and the island fell to discussing in all its ramifications the loss of the *Grenoble* in the China Seas, with all her officers and half her crew born and married on Island McGill. But the rumor would not stay down. Sara Dack was louder in her assertions, the looks Tom Henan cast about him were blacker than ever, and Dr. Hall, after a visit to the Henan house, no longer pooh-pooh'd. Then Island McGill sat up, and there was a tremendous wagging of tongues. It was unnatural and ungodly. The like had never been heard. And when, as time passed, the truth of Sara Dack's utterances was manifest, the island folk decided, like the bosun of the *Starry Grace*, that only the Devil could have had a hand in so untoward a happening. And the infatuated woman, so Sara Dack reported, insisted that it would be a boy. "Eleven bairns ha' I borne," she said; "sux o' them lassies and five o' them loddies. An' sunce there be balance un all thungs, so wull there be balance wuth me. Sux o' one an' half a dozen o' the



## THE SHORT STORY

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other — there uz the balance, an' oz sure oz the sun rises un' the marnun', thot sure wull ut be a boy."

And boy it was, and a prodigy. Doctor Hall raved about its unblemished perfection and massive strength, and wrote a brochure on it for the Dublin Medical Society as the most interesting case of the sort in his long career.

When Sara Dack gave the babe's unbelievable weight, Island McGill refused to believe and once again called her liar. But when Dr. Hall attested that he had himself weighed it and seen it tip that very notch, Island McGill held its breath and accepted whatever report Sara Dack made of the infant's progress or appetite. And once again Margaret Henan carried a babe to Belfast and had it christened Samuel.

"Oz good oz gold it was," said Sara Dack to me.

Sara, at the time I met her, was a buxom, phlegmatic spinster of sixty, equipped with an experience so tragic and unusual that though her tongue ran on for decades its output would still be of imperishable interest to her cronies.

"Oz good as gold," said Sara Dack. "Ut never fretted. Sut ut down un the sun by the hour an' never a sound ut would make oz long oz ut was no hungered. An' thot strong! The grup o' uts honds was like a mon's. I mind me when ut was but hours' old, ut gruppued me so mighty thot I fetcht a scream I was thot frightened. Ut was the punk o' health. Ut slept an' ate, an' grew. Ut never bothered. Never a night's sleep ut lost tull no one, nor even a munut's, an' thot wuth cuttun' uts teeth an' all. An' Margaret would dandle



ut on her knee an' ask was there ever so fine a loddie un the three kingdoms.

“ The way ut grew ! Ut was un keepun' wuth the way ut ate. Ot a year ut was the size o' a bairn of two. Ut was slow tull walk an' talk. Exceptun' for gurgly noises un uts throat an' for creepun' on all-fours, ut dudna monage much un the walkun' an' talkun' line. But thot was tull be expected from the way ut grew. Ut all went tull growun' strong an' healthy. An' even old Tom Henan cheered up ot the might of ut an' said was there ever the like o' ut un the three kungdoms. Ut was Doctor Hall thot first suspicioned, I mind me well, though ut was luttie I dreamt what he was up tull ot the time. I see hum holdun' thungs un front o' luttie Sammy's eyes, an' a-makun' noises, loud an' soft, an' far an' near, un' little Sammy's ears. An' then I see Doctor Hall go away, wrunklun' hus eyebrows an' shakun' hus head like the bairn was ailun'. But he was no ailun', oz I could swear tull, me a-seeun' hum eat an' grow. But Doctor Hall no said a word tull Margaret, an' I was no for guessun' the why he was sore puzzled.

“ I mind me when luttie Sammy first spoke. He was two years old an' the size of a child o' five, though he could no monage the walkun' yet but went around on all-fours, happy an' contented-like an' makun' no trouble oz long oz he was fed promptly, whuch was onusual often. I was hangun' the wash on the line ot the time, when out he comes on all-fours, hus bug head waggun' tull an' fro an' blunkun' un the sun. An' then, suddent, he talked. I was thot took a-back I near died o' fright, an' fine I knew ut then the shakun' o' Doctor Hall's head. Talked ? Never a bairn on Island McGill talked so loud an' tull

## THE SHORT STORY

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such purpose. There was no mistakun' ut. I stood there all tremblun' an' shakun'. Luttie Sammy was brayun'. I tell you, sir, he was brayun' like an ass — just like thot, loud an' long an' cheerful tull ut seemed hus lungs ud crack.

“ He was a eediot — a great, awful, monster eediot. Ut was after he talked thot Doctor Hall told Margaret, but she would no believe. Ut would all come right, she said. Ut was growun' too fast for aught else. Give ut time, said she, an' we would see. But old Tom Henan knew an' he never held up hus head again. He could no abide the thung, an' would no brung humsel' tull touch ut, though I am no denyun' he was fair fascinated by ut. Mony the time I see hum watchun' of ut around a corner, lookun' ot ut tull hus eyes fair bulged wuth the horror; an' when ut brayed, old Tom ud stuch hus fungers tull hus ears an' look thot miserable I could a-puttied hum.

“ An' bray ut could! Ut was the only thung ut could do beside eat an' grow. Whenever ut was hungry ut brayed, an' there was no stoppun' ut save wuth food. An' always of a marnun', when first ut crawled tull the kutchen-door an' blunked out ot the sun, ut brayed. An' ut was brayun' thot brought about uts end.

“ I mind me well. Ut was three years old and ez bug oz a lod o' ten. Old Tom hod been gown' from bod tull worse, ploughun' up an' down the fields an' talkun' an' mutturun' tull humself. On the marnun' o' the day I mind me, he was sittun' on the bench outside the kutchun' a-futtun' a handle tull a puck-axe. Unbeknown, the monster eediot crawled tull the door and brayed after hus fashion ot the sun. I see old Tom start up an' look. An' there was the monster eediot waggun'

uts bug head an' blunkun' an' brayun' like the great bug ass ut was. Ut was too much for Tom. Somethun' went wrong with hum suddent-like. He jumped tull his feet an' fetched the puck-handle down on the monster eediot's head. An' he hut ut again an' again like ut was a mad dog an' hum afeared o' ut. An' he went straight tull the stable an' hung humsel' tull a rafter. An' I was no for stoppun' on after such-like, an' I went tull stay along wuth me suster thot was married tull John Martin an' comfortable off."

I sat on the bench by the kitchen door and regarded Margaret Henan, while with her callous thumb she pressed down the live fire of her pipe and gazed out across the twilight-sombered fields. It was the very bench Tom Henan sat upon that last sanguinary day of life. And Margaret sat in the doorway where the monster, blinking at the sun, had so often wagged its head and brayed. We had been talking for an hour, she with that slow certitude of eternity that so befitted her; and for the life of me I could lay no finger on the motives that ran through the tangled warp and woof of her. Was she a martyr to Truth? Did she have it in her to worship at so abstract a shrine? Had she conceived Abstract Truth to be the one high goal of human endeavor on that day of long ago when she named her first-born Samuel? Or was hers the stubborn obstinacy of the ox? the fixity of purpose of the balky horse? the stolidity of the self-willed peasant-mind? Was it whim or fancy? — the one-streak of lunacy in what was otherwise an eminently rational mind? Or, reverting, was hers the spirit of a Bruno? Was she convinced of the

## THE SHORT STORY

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intellectual rightness of the stand she had taken? Was hers a steady, enlightened opposition to superstition? or — and a subtler thought — was she mastered by some vaster, profounder superstition, fetish-worship of which the Alpha and Omega was the cryptic *Samuel*?

“ Wull ye be tellun’ me,” she said, “ thot uf the second Samuel hod been named Larry, thot he would no hov fell un the hot watter and drowned? Atween you an’ me, sir, an’ ye are untellugent-lookun’ tull the eye, would the name hov made ut onyways dufferunt? Would the washun’ no be done thot day uf he had been Larry or Michael? Would hot watter no be hot, an’ would hot watter no burn, uf he hod hod ony other name but Samuel? ”

I acknowledged the justness of her contention, and she went on.

“ Do a wee but of a name change the plans o’ God? Do the world run by hut or muss, an’ be God a weak, shully-shallyun’ creature that ud alter the fate an’ destiny o’ thungs because the worm Margaret Henan seen fut tull name her bairn Samuel? There be my son Jamie. He wull no sign a Rooshan-Funn un hus crew because o’ believun’ thot Rooshan-Funns do be monajun’ the wunds an’ hov the makun’ o’ bod weather. Wull you be thunkun’ so? Wull you be thunkun’ thot God thot makes the wunds tull blow wull bend hus head from on high tull lusten tull the word o’ a greasy Rooshan-Funn un some dirty shup’s fo’c’sle? ”

I said no, certainly not; but she was not to be set aside from pressing home the point of her argument.

“ Then wull you be thunkun’ thot God thot directs the stars un their courses an’ tull whose mighty foot the



## SAMUEL

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world uz but a footstool, wull you be thunkun' thot he wull take a spite again' Margaret Henan an' send a bug wave off the Cape tull wash her son un tull eternity, all because she was for namun' hum Samuel? "

" But why Samuel? " I asked.

" And thot I dinna know. I wanted ut so."

" But why did you want it so? "

" An' uz ut me thot would be answerun' a such-like question? Be there ony mon luvun' or dead thot can answer? Who can tell the *why* o' like? My Jamie was fair daft on buttermulk; he would drink ut tull, oz he said humself, hus back-teeth was awash. But my Tumothy could no abide buttermulk. I like tull lussen tull the thunder growlun' an' roarun', an' rampajun'. My Katie could no abide the noise of ut, but must scream an' flutter an' go runnun' for the mudmost o' a feather-bed. Never yet hov I heard the answer tull the *why* o' like. God alone hoz thot answer. You an' me be mortal an' we canna know. Enough for us tull know what we like an' what we duslike. I *like* — thot uz the first word an' the last. And behind thot *like* no mon can go and find the *why* o' ut. I like Samuel, an' I like ut wull. Ut uz a sweet name, an' there be a rollun' wonder un the sound o' ut thot passes onderstondun'."

The twilight deepened, and in the silence I gazed upon that splendid dome of a forehead which time could not mar, at the width between the eyes, and at the eyes themselves, clear, out-looking, and wide-seeing. She rose to her feet with an air of dismissing me, saying:

" Ut wull be a dark walk home, an' there wull be more thon a sprunkle o' wet on the sky."



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ Have you any regrets, Margaret Henan? ” I asked suddenly and without forethought.

She studied me a moment.

“ Ay, thot I no ha’ borne another son.”

“ And you would . . . ? ” I faltered.

“ Ay, thot I would,” she answered. “ Ut would ha’ been hus name.”

I went down the dark road between the hawthorne hedges, puzzling over the why of like, repeating *Samuel* to myself and aloud and listening to the rolling wonder in its sound that had charmed her soul and led her life in tragic places. *Samuel!* There was a rolling wonder in the sound of it. Ay, there was!

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE \*

By Ruth Sawyer

Ruth Sawyer Durand is an American writer who has recently succeeded in doing in a very delightful way in short story fiction what the Irish dramatists have done in comedy and tragedy. Other of Mrs. Durand's stories may be found in *The Outlook* for 1911 and 1912.

If you would hear a tale in Ireland, you must first tell one. So it happened, as we sat in the Hegartys' cabin on a late fall night after a cross-roads dance, that I, the stranger, found myself beginning the story-telling. The cabin was overflowing with neighbors from the hills about: girls and lads stretched tired-limbed beside the hearth, elders sitting in an outer circle. The men smoked, the women were busy with their knitting, and the old gray piper — hidden in the shadow of the chimney-corner — sat with his pipes across his knees, fingering the stops with tenderness as unconsciously as a parent's hand goes out to stroke a much-loved child. From between the curtains of the outshot bed peered the children, sleepless-eyed and laughing. The kettle hung, freshly filled, over the fire; the empty griddle stood beside it, ready for a late baking, for there would be tea and currant-bread at the end of the evening.

I remember I told the legend of the Catskills, dwelling long on Rip's shrewish wife and the fame of her sharp

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## THE SHORT STORY

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tongue. They liked the story; I knew well that they would, for the supernatural lies close to the Irish heart; and before ever it was finished Michael Hegarty was knocking the ashes from his pipe that he might be ready with the next tale.

“ That’s grand,” he said at the conclusion. “ Do ye know, ye’ve given me a great consolation? I was afther thinkin’ that Ireland had the exclusive rights to all the sharp-tongued, pestherin’ wives,” and he shook his head teasingly at the wife who sat across the firelight from him.

“ Did ye, now? ” she answered, her face drawn into an expression of mock solemnity. “ Sure, was it because ye knew we had the run o’ vagabone husbands? ”

The children gurgled with appreciative merriment, but Michael pulled me gently by the sleeve.

“ I have a tale — do ye know Willie Shakespeare? ”

I nodded, surprised at the question.

“ Well, ye may not be knowin’ this: he was afther writin’ a play a few hundthred years ago which he took sthraight out of a Connaught tale. Like as not he had it from an Irish nurse, or maybe he heard it from a rovin’ tinker that came to his town.”

“ Which play do you mean? ”

“ Faith, I haven’t the name by me handy, just, but your story put me in mind of it. I was readin’ it myself once, so it’s the truth I am tellin’ ye. He has it changed a wee bit — turned it an’ patched it an’ made it up in a sthrange fashion; but ’tis the same tale, for all o’ that. Sure, did ye ever know an Englishman yet that would let on to anything he’d took from an Irishman? ”

A joyful murmur greeted the last.

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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“ Tell us the tale,” I said.

There was a long pause; the burning turf sifted down into “ faery gold ” upon the hearth and the kettle commenced to sing. Michael Hegarty smiled foolishly —

“ I am afther wishin’ ye had the Gaelic so as I could tell it to ye right. Ye see, I’m not good at givin’ a tale in English — I haven’t the words, just ”; and he fumbled uneasily with his empty pipe.

“ Ye can do it,” said the wife, proudly.

“ I can make the try,” he answered, simply; and then he added, regretfully, “ But I wish ye had the Gaelic.”

Thus did Michael Hegarty begin the story of the Princess and the Vagabone. I marveled at first that the poetry and beauty of language should come so readily yet so unconsciously to his lips; and then I remembered that his people had once been the poets of the world, and men had come from far away to be taught by them.

This is the tale as he told it that night by the hearth — save that the soft Donegal brogue is missing, and nowhere can you hear the rhythmic click of the knitters’ needles or the singing of the kettle on the crook making accompaniment.

Once, in the olden time, when an Irish king sat in every province and plenty covered the land, so that fat wee pigs ran free on the highroad, crying, “ Who’ll eat us? ” there lived in Connaught a grand old king with one daughter. She was as tall and slender as the reeds that grow by Loch Erne, and her face was the fairest in seven counties. This was more the pity, for the temper she had did not match it at all, at all; it was the blackest and ugliest that ever fell to the birthlot of a princess.

## THE SHORT STORY

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She was proud, she was haughty; her tongue had the length and the sharpness of the thorns on a sidheog bush; and from the day she was born till long after she was a woman grown she was never heard to say a kind word or known to do a kind deed to a living creature.

As each year passed, the King would think to himself, " 'Tis the New Year will see her better." But it was worse instead of better she grew, until one day the King found himself at the end of his patience, and he groaned aloud as he sat alone, drinking his poteen.

"Faith, another man shall have her for the next eighteen years, for, by my soul, I've had my fill of her!"

So it came about, as I am telling ye, that the King sent word to the nobles of the neighboring provinces that whosoever would win the consent of his daughter in marriage should have the half of his kingdom and the whole of his blessing. On the day that she was eighteen they came: a wonderful procession of earls, dukes, princes, and kings, riding up to the castle gate, a-court-ing. The air was filled with the ring of the silver trappings on their horses, and the courtyard was gay with the colors of their bratas and the long cloaks they wore, riding. The King made each welcome according to his rank; and then he sent a serving-man to his daughter, bidding her come and choose her suitor, the time being ripe for her to marry. It was a courteous message that the King sent, but the Princess heard little of it. She flew into the hall on the heels of the serving-man, like a fowl hawk after a bantam cock. Her eyes burned with the anger that was hot in her heart, while she stamped her foot in the King's face until the rafters rang with the noise of it.



## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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“ So ye will be giving me away for the asking — to any one of these blithering fools who have a rag to their backs or a castle to their names? ”

The King grew crimson at her words. He was ashamed that they should all hear how sharp was her tongue; moreover, he was fearsome lest they should take to their heels and leave him with a shrew on his hands for another eighteen years. He was hard at work piecing together a speech made up of all the grand words he knew, when the Princess strode past him on to the first suitor in the line.

“ At any rate, I’ll not be choosin’ ye, ye long-legged corn-crake,” and she gave him a sound kick as she went on to the next. He was a large man with a shaggy beard; and, seeing how the first suitor had fared, he tried a wee bit of a smile on her while his hand went out coaxingly. She saw, and the anger in her grew three-fold.

She sprang at him, digging the two of her hands deep in his beard, and then she wagged his foolish head back and forth, screaming:

“ Take that, and that, and that, ye old whiskered rascal! ”

It was a miracle that any beard was left on his face the way that she pulled it. But she let him go free at last, and turned to a thin, sharp-faced prince with a monstrous long nose. The nose took her fancy, and she gave it a tweak, telling the prince to take himself home before he did any damage with it. The next one she called “ pudding-face ” and slapped his fat cheeks until they were purple, and the poor lad groaned with the sting of it.

## THE SHORT STORY

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“ Go back to your trough, for I’ll not marry a grunter, i’ faith,” said she.

She moved swiftly down the line in less time than it takes for the telling. It came to the mind of many of the suitors that they would be doing a wise thing if they betook themselves off before their turn came; so as many of them as were not fastened to the floor with fear started away. There happened to be a fat, crooked-legged prince from Leinster just making for the door when the Princess looked around. In a trice she reached out for the tongs that stood on the hearth near by, and she laid it across his shoulders, sending him spinning into the yard.

“ Take that, ye old gander, and good riddance to ye ! ” she cried after him.

It was then that she saw looking at her a great towering giant of a man; and his eyes burned through hers, deep down into her soul. So great was he that he could have picked her up with a single hand and thrown her after the gander; and she knew it, and yet she felt no fear. He was as handsome as Nuada of the Silver Hand; and not a mortal fault could she have found with him, not if she had tried for a hundred years. The two of them stood facing each other, glaring, as if each would spring at the other’s throat the next moment; but all the while the Princess was thinking how wonderful he was, from the top of his curling black hair, down the seven feet of him, to the golden clasps on his shoes. What the man was thinking I cannot be telling. Like a breath of wind on smoldering turf, her liking for him set her anger fierce-burning again. She gave him a sound cuff of the ear; then turned, and with a sob in her throat she went flying from the room, the serving-men scattering before her

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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as if she had been a hundred million robbers on a raid.

And the King? Faith, he was dumb with rage. But when he saw the blow that his daughter had given to the finest gentleman in all Ireland, he went after her as if he had been two hundred million constables on the trail of the robbers.

"Ye are a disgrace and a shame to me," said he, catching up with her and holding firmly to her two hands; "and, what's more, ye are a disgrace and a blemish to my castle and my kingdom; I'll not keep ye in it a day longer. The first traveling vagabone who comes begging at the door shall have ye for his wife."

"Will he?" and the Princess tossed her head in the King's face and went to her chamber.

The next morning a poor singing *sthrónshuch* came to the castle to sell a song for a penny or a morsel of bread. The song was sweet that he sang, and the Princess listened as Oona, the tirewoman, was winding strands of her long black hair with golden thread:

The gay young wran sang over the moor.

"I'll build me a nest," sang he.

"'Twill have a thatch and a wee latched door,

For the wind blows cold from the sea.

And I'll let no one but my true love in,

For she is the mate for me,"

Sang the gay young wran.

The wee brown wran by the hedgerow cried —

"I'll wait for him here," cried she.

"For the way is far and the world is wide,

And he might miss the way to me.

Long is the time when the heart is shut,

But I'll open to none save he,"

Sang the wee brown wran.

## THE SHORT STORY

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A strange throb came to the heart of the Princess when the song was done. She pulled her hair free from the hands of the tirewoman.

"Get silver," she said; "I would throw it to him." And when she saw the wonderment grow in Oona's face, she added: "The song pleased me. Can I not pay for what I like without having ye look at me as if ye feared my wits had flown? Go, get the silver!"

But when she pushed open the grating and leaned far out to throw it, the *sthronshuch* had gone.

For the King had heard the song as well as the Princess. His rage was still with him, and when he saw who it was, he lost no time, but called him quickly inside.

"Ye are as fine a vagabone as I could wish for," he said. "Maybe ye're not knowing it, but ye are a bridegroom this day." And the King went on to tell him the whole tale. The tale being finished, he sent ten strong men to bring the Princess down.

A king's word was law in those days. The Vagabone knew this; and, what's more, he knew he must marry the Princess, whether he liked it or no. The Vagabone had great height, but he stooped so that it shortened the length of him. His hair was long, and it fell, uncombed and matted, about his shoulders. His brogues were patched, his hose were sadly worn, and with his rags he was the sorriest cut of a man that a maid ever laid her two eyes on. When the Princess came, she was dressed in a gown of gold, with jewels hanging from every thread of it, and her cap was caught with a jeweled brooch. She looked as beautiful as a May morning — with a thunder-cloud rising back of the hills; and the Vagabone held



## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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his breath for a moment, watching her. Then he pulled the King gently by the arm.

“ I’ll not have a wife that looks grander than myself. If I marry your daughter, I must marry her in rags — the same as my own.”

The King agreed ’twas a good idea, and sent for the worst dress of rags in the whole countryside. The rags were fetched, the Princess dressed, the priest brought, and the two of them married; and, though she cried and she kicked and she cuffed and she prayed, she was the Vagabone’s wife — hard and fast.

“ Now take her, and good luck go with ye,” said the King. Then his eyes fell on the tongs on the hearth. “ Here, take these along — they may come in handy on the road; but, whatever ye do, don’t let them out of your hands, for your wife is very powerful with them herself.”

Out of the castle gate, across the gardens, and into the country that lay beyond went the Princess and the Vagabone. The sky was blue over their heads and the air was full of spring; each wee creature that passed them on the road seemed bursting with the joy of it. There was naught but anger in the Princess’ heart, however; and what was in the heart of the Vagabone I cannot be telling. This I know — that he sang the “ Song of the Wran ” as they went. Often and often the Princess turned back on the road or sat down, swearing she would go no farther; and often and often did she feel the weight of the tongs across her shoulders that day.

At noon the two sat down by the cross-roads to rest.

“ I am hungry,” said the Princess; “ not a morsel of food have I tasted this day. Ye will go get me some.”



## THE SHORT STORY

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“Not I, my dear,” said the Vagabone; “ye will go beg for yourself.”

“Never,” said the Princess.

“Then ye’ll go hungry,” said the Vagabone; and that was all. He lighted his pipe and went to sleep with one eye open and the tongs under him.

One, two, three hours passed, and the sun hung low in the sky. The Princess sat there until hunger drove her to her feet. She rose wearily and stumbled to the road. It might have been the sound of wheels that had startled her, I cannot be telling; but as she reached the road a great coach drawn by six black horses came galloping up. The Princess made a sign for it to stop; for though she was in rags, yet she was still so beautiful that the coachman drew in the horses and asked her what she was wanting.

“I am near to starving;” and as she spoke the tears started to her eyes, while a new soft note crept into her voice. “Do ye think your master could spare me a bit of food — or a shilling?” and the hand that had been used to strike went out for the first time to beg.

It was a prince who rode inside the coach that day, and he heard her. Reaching out a fine, big hamper through the window, he told her she was hearty welcome to whatever she found in it, along with his blessing. But as she put up her arms for it, just, she looked — and saw that the prince was none other than the fat suitor whose face she had slapped on the day before. Then anger came back to her again, for the shame of begging from him. She emptied the hamper — chicken pasty, jam, currant bread, and all — on top of his head, peering through the window, and threw the empty basket at the coachman.

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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Away drove the coach ; away ran the Princess, and threw herself, sobbing, on the ground, near the Vagabone.

“ ’Twas a good dinner that ye lost,” said the Vagabone ; and that was all.

But the next coach that passed she stopped. This time it was the shaggy-bearded rascal that rode inside. She paid no heed, however, and begged again for food ; but her cheeks grew crimson when he looked at her, and she had to be biting her lips fiercely to keep the sharp words back.

“ Ye are a lazy good-for-naught to beg. Why don’t ye work for your food ? ” called the rascal after her.

And the Vagabone answered : “ Ye are right entirely. ’Tis a sin to beg, and tomorrow I’ll be teaching her a trade, so she need never be asking charity again upon the highroad.”

That night they reached a wee scrap of a cabin on the side of a hill. The Vagabone climbed the steps and opened the door. “ Here we are at home, my dear,” said he.

“ What kind of a home do ye call that ? ” and the Princess stamped her foot. “ Faith, I’ll not live in it.”

“ Then ye can live outside ; it’s all the same to me.” The Vagabone went in and closed the door after him ; and in a moment he was whistling merrily the song of “ The Wee Brown Wran.”

The Princess sat down on the ground and nursed her poor tired knees. She had walked many a mile that day, with a heavy heart and an empty stomach — two of the worst traveling companions ye can find. The night came down, black as a raven’s wing ; the dew fell, heavy as rain, wetting the rags and chilling the Princess

## THE SHORT STORY

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to the marrow. The wind blew fresh from the sea, and the wolves began their howling in the woods near by, and at last, what with the cold and the fear and the loneliness of it, she could bear it no longer, and she crept softly up to the cabin and went in.

“ There’s the creepy-stool by the fire, waiting for ye,” said the Vagabone; and that was all. But late in the night he lifted her from the chimney-corner where she had dropped asleep and laid her gently on the bed, which was freshly made and clean. And he sat by the hearth till dawn, keeping the turf piled high on the fire, so that the cold would not waken her. Once he left the hearth; coming to the bedside, he stood a moment to watch her while she slept, and he stopped and kissed the wee pink palm of her hand that lay there like a half-closed loch lily.

Next morning the first thing the Princess asked was where was the breakfast, and where were the servants to wait on her, and where were some decent clothes.

“ Your servants are your own two hands, and they will serve ye well when ye teach them how,” was the answer she got.

“ I’ll have neither breakfast nor clothes if I have to be getting them myself. And shame on ye for treating a wife so,” and the Princess caught up a piggin and threw it at the Vagabone.

He jumped clear of it, and it struck the wall behind him. “ Have your own way, my dear,” and he left her to go out on the bogs and cut turf.

That night the Princess hung the kettle and made stir-about and griddle bread for the two of them.

“ ’Tis the best I have tasted since I was a lad and

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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my mother made the baking," said the Vagabone, and that was all. But often and often his lips touched the braids of her hair as she passed him in the dark; and again he sat through the night, keeping the fire and mending her wee leather brogues, that they might be whole against the morrow.

Next day he brought some sally twigs and showed her how to weave them into creels to sell on coming market-day. But the twigs cut her fingers until they bled, and the Princess cried, making the Vagabone white with rage. Never had she seen such a rage in another creature. He threw the sally twigs about the cabin, making them whirl and eddy like leaves before an autumn wind; he stamped upon the half-made creel, crushing it to pulp under his feet; and, catching up the table, he tore it to splinters, throwing the fragments into the fire, where they blazed.

"By St. Patrick, 'tis a bad bargain that ye are! I will take ye this day to the castle in the next county, where I hear they are needing a scullery-maid, and there I'll apprentice ye to the King's cook."

"I will not go," said the Princess; but even as she spoke fear showed in her eyes and her knees began to tremble under her.

"Aye, but ye will, my dear;" and the Vagabone took up the tongs quietly from the hearth.

For a month the Princess worked in the castle of the King, and all that time she never saw the Vagabone.

Often and often she said to herself, fiercely, that she was well rid of him; but often, as she sat alone after her work in the cool of the night, she would wish for the



## THE SHORT STORY

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song of "The Wee Brown Wran," while a new loneliness crept deeper and deeper into her heart.

She worked hard about the kitchen, and as she scrubbed the pots and turned the spit and cleaned the floor with fresh white sand she listened to the wonderful tales the other servants had to tell of the King. They had it that he was the handsomest, aye, and the strongest, king in all Ireland; and every man and child and little creature in his kingdom worshiped him. And after the tales were told the Princess would say to herself: "If I had not been so proud and free with my tongue, I might have married such a king, and ruled his kingdom with him, learning kindness."

Now it happened one day that the Princess was told to be unusually spry and careful about her work; and there was a monstrous deal of it to be done: cakes to be iced and puddings to be boiled, fat ducks to be roasted, and a whole sucking pig put on the spit to turn.

"What's the meaning of all this?" asked the Princess.

"Ochone, ye poor feeble-minded girl!" and the cook looked at her pityingly. "Haven't ye heard the King is to be married this day to the fairest princess in seven counties?"

"Once that was I," thought the Princess, and she sighed.

"What makes ye sigh?" asked the cook.

"I was wishing, just, that I could be having a peep at her and the King."

"Faith, that's possible. Do your work well, and maybe I can put ye where ye can see without being seen."



## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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So it came about, as I am telling ye, at the end of the day, when the feast was ready and the guests come, that the Princess was hidden behind the broidered curtains in the great hall. There, where no one could see her, she watched the hundreds upon hundreds of fair ladies and fine noblemen in their silken dresses and shining coats, all silver and gold, march back and forth across the hall, laughing and talking and making merry among themselves. Then the pipes began to play, and everybody was still. From the farthest end of the hall came two-and-twenty lads in white and gold; these were followed by two-and-twenty pipers in green and gold and two-and-twenty bowmen in saffron and gold, and, last of all, the King.

A scream, a wee wisp of a cry, broke from the Princess, and she would have fallen had she not caught one of the curtains. For the King was as tall and strong and beautiful as Nuada of the Silver Hand; and from the top of his curling black hair down the seven feet of him to the golden clasps of his shoes he was every whit as handsome as he had been that day when she had cuffed him in her father's castle.

The King heard the cry and stopped the pipers. "I think," said he, "there's a scullery-maid behind the curtains. Someone fetch her to me."

A hundred hands pulled the Princess out; a hundred more pushed her across the hall to the feet of the King, and held her there, fearing lest she should escape. "What were ye doing there?" the King asked.

"Looking at ye, and wishing I had the undoing of things I have done," and the Princess hung her head and sobbed piteously.

## THE SHORT STORY

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“Nay, sweetheart, things are best as they are,” and there came a look into the King’s eyes that blinded those watching, so that they turned away and left the two alone.

“Heart of mine,” he went on, softly, “are ye not knowing me?”

“Ye are putting more shame on me because of my evil tongue and the blow my hand gave ye that day.”

“I’ faith, it is not so. Look at me.”

Slowly the eyes of the Princess looked into the eyes of the King. For a moment she could not be reading them; she was as a child who pores over a strange tale after the light fades and it grows too dark to see. But bit by bit the meaning of it came to her, and her heart grew glad with the wonder of it. Out went her arms to him with the cry of loneliness that had been hers so long.

“I never dreamed that it was ye; never once.”

“Can ye ever love and forgive?” asked the King.

“Hush ye!” and the Princess laid her finger on his lips.

The tirewomen were called and she was led away. Her rags were changed for a dress that was spun from gold and woven with pearls, and her beauty shone about her like a great light.

They were married again that night, for none of the guests were knowing of that first wedding long ago.

Late o’ that night a singing *sthronshuch* came under the Princess’ window, and very softly the words of his song came to her:

## THE PRINCESS AND THE VAGABONE

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The gay young wran sang over the moor.

"I'll build me a nest," sang he.

"'Twill have a thatch and a wee latched door,

For the wind blows cold from the sea.

And I'll let no one but my true love in,

For she is the mate for me,"

Sang the gay young wran.

The wee brown wran by the hedgerow cried —

"I'll wait for him here," cried she.

"For the way is far and the world is wide,

And he might miss the way to me.

Long is the time when the heart is shut,

But I'll open to none save he,"

Sang the wee brown wran.

The grating opened slowly; the Princess leaned far out, her eyes like stars in the night, and when she spoke there was naught but gentleness and love in her voice.

"Here is the silver I would have thrown ye on a day long gone by. Shall I throw it now, or will ye come for it?"

And that was how a princess of Connaught was won by a king who was a vagabone.

## HEART OF DARKNESS \*

By Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad is a native of Poland, who has chosen England as his home and the English tongue as his literary language. He was born in 1857, and as a boy chose the life of the sea as his calling. At the age of nineteen he entered the English Merchant Service and soon rose through the ranks of apprentice and mate to that of master, and thus followed the sea for nineteen years. When he began his first book, he had to choose between French, a language he had known from boyhood, and English, a tongue acquired in early manhood. He chose English. *Almayer's Folly* was this first book. It was begun in 1890 and written at odd times afloat and ashore during the next five years. Mr. Conrad left the sea soon after his literary success had become an assured fact and now makes his home in the south of England.

Among his best known books are: *Almayer's Folly*, 1895; *An Outcast of the Islands*, 1896; *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, 1897; *Tales of Unrest*, 1898; *Lord Jim*, 1900; *Youth, and Two Other Tales*, 1902; *Typhoon*, 1903; *Nostromo*, 1904; *The Mirror of the Sea*, 1906; and *The Secret Agent*, 1907.

*Heart of Darkness* is in reality a novelette. It is one of the three narratives included in the volume entitled *Youth*, published by Messrs. Doubleday, Page, and Company. Conrad's style is individual and his technic different from that of the usual short story writer. Instead of deliberate plot-making he appears to be telling a story from first hand experience. He lets us have the details as they recur to him, and the effect is tremendously like life. Apparently he is not concerned with ethical or philosophical themes. He mirrors a phase of life

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## HEART OF DARKNESS

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and lets it sink home, carrying whatever meaning it will. *Heart of Darkness* is a terrible condemnation of the commercial policy of those who exploit the tropics; but one feels that Mr. Conrad's chief concern is to depict the sinking of a great soul back into elemental savagery under the compelling spell of the torrid jungle. It is the story of the reversion of the soul of Mr. Kurtz.

The chief external difference between a short story and a novelette is in the observance of economy of means. There are tales that do not admit of economy. The writer deals with many people in extensive spaces and seeks to produce results which cannot be held within the compass of a few thousand words. Such a tale is *Heart of Darkness*.

Only the final third of the story is here given in full. The beginning and middle (sections one and two), for want of space in this volume, must be presented in the form of a synopsis — a feeble device when one comes to recognize the necessity of producing a cumulative effect in order fully to realize the appalling culmination of the spell of the jungle.

### I

Five men — a Director of Companies, a Lawyer, an Accountant, the narrator, and Marlow — all one-time seamen, are aboard a cruising yawl and waiting at night at the mouth of the Thames for the turn of the tide. They watch the lights of traffic go by, up to London or down to the sea.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

Marlow then begins to compare the coming of the Romans to Britain with the conquest of the equatorial dark places by the civilized men of his own day, and suddenly concludes that the Romans did in Britain just what he has seen modern Europeans do in Africa. "It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on



## THE SHORT STORY

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a large scale, and men going it blind — as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness.”

He works up to his story. Returning to London after long cruises in the East he is unable to find a suitable ship. As a child the blank places on the map had lured him. One such dark place now beckons — a tropical jungle where a continental company has a number of trading posts. Through the influence of a benevolent old aunt he is sent down there as the captain of a river steamboat. After thirty days he is set ashore at the mouth of the big river. He goes up the river for thirty miles on a small sea-going steamer and is landed at the company's post. Here he gets his first sight of the brutalizing effect of the darkness. It is at this station that he first hears of an efficient man somewhere in the interior named Mr. Kurtz. Marlow now joins a caravan of sixty men on a march of two hundred miles up the river to the main station of the company, where he is to meet the manager and take charge of his steamboat. Upon his arrival after fifteen days he learns that the boat has been sunk and that Mr. Kurtz's station far up the river is in peril and Kurtz himself desperately ill.

The general manager and a number of “pilgrims,” hanging about the central station drawing pay and awaiting promotion, are jealous of Mr. Kurtz and hope that he will die before help can reach him. Marlow learns that Mr. Kurtz is a man of energy sent out from Europe by the “gang of virtue” to learn the business and eventually become the resident manager. He has proved efficient. The lethargy of the jungle has not come upon him. He has lived. He is sending out more ivory than

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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all the other stations combined. We become interested in Mr. Kurtz. We are anxious that he be relieved.

### II

The second part takes us up the river a thousand miles to Mr. Kurtz's station. Marlow has succeeded in raising and repairing the boat after a delay of six months or more. Incidentally he has learned while waiting that Mr. Kurtz has come out originally with the idea of commercial success uppermost but with a notion as well that "Each station should be like a beacon on the road to better things, a center for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing." Some months before Mr. Kurtz had started down the river with a string of canoes loaded with ivory, but after coming three hundred miles of the way, had for some mysterious reason given over the charge of the ivory to a half-caste assistant and returned to his empty station alone.

It takes the men in the wretched steamboat two months to make the journey up the tropical river to Mr. Kurtz's station. Fifty miles below the station they came to an abandoned hut on the river bank. A message on a board said, "Hurry up. Approach cautiously." They suppose the hut to belong to a trader who had been giving the company some anxiety. The boat is attacked by savages just before reaching the station and the helmsman is killed. All is quiet at the station. The rival trader meets the manager and assures him that Mr. Kurtz, though desperately ill, still lives.

Before reaching the end of the section Mr. Conrad allows Marlow to anticipate his actual meeting with Mr. Kurtz and tell us about the boat load of ivory that

## THE SHORT STORY

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had been collected by Kurtz, and what Kurtz has said to him on the return down the river. Kurtz had placed in the hands of Marlow the manuscript of a report he had written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. "But this," explains Marlow, "must have been written before his—let us say—nerves went wrong and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which were offered up to him—to Mr. Kurtz himself." At the end of the pamphlet and apparently written much later than the original manuscript Marlow found, this sentence, "Exterminate all the brutes!"

At the opening of section three the boat has landed. The savages have retired to the forest surrounding the clearing about the station. The manager and the "pilgrims" have gone to the hut where Mr. Kurtz lies sick unto death. The young Russian trader in the motley apparel has come on board the boat to talk English with Marlow.

### III

"I looked at him, lost in astonishment. There he was before me, in motley, as though he had absconded from a troupe of mimes, enthusiastic, fabulous. His very existence was improbable, inexplicable, and altogether bewildering. He was an insoluble problem. It was inconceivable how he had existed, how he had succeeded in getting so far, how he had managed to remain—why he did not instantly disappear. 'I went a little farther,' he said, 'then still a little farther—till I had gone so far that I don't know how I'll ever get back. Never mind. Plenty time. I can manage. You take

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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Kurtz away quick — quick — I tell you.' The glamour of youth enveloped his particolored rags, his destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings. For months — for years — his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase; and there he was gallantly, thoughtlessly alive, to all appearance indestructible solely by the virtue of his few years and of his unreflecting audacity. I was seduced into something like admiration — like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him unscathed. He surely wanted nothing from the wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through. His need was to exist, and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of privation. If the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth. I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame. It seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely, that, even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he — the man before your eyes — who had gone through these things. I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism. I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far.

" They had come together unavoidably, like two ships becalmed near each other, and lay rubbing sides at last. I suppose Kurtz wanted an audience, because on a certain occasion, when encamped in the forest, they had talked all night, or more probably Kurtz had talked. ' We talked of everything,' he said, quite transported at the recollection. ' I forgot there was such a thing



## THE SHORT STORY

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as sleep. The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything! . . . Of love too.' 'Ah, he talked to you of love!' I said, much amused. 'It isn't what you think,' he cried, almost passionately. 'It was in general. He made me see things — things.'

"He threw his arms up. We were on deck at the time, and the headman of my wood-cutters, lounging near by, turned upon him his heavy and glittering eyes. I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness. 'And, ever since, you have been with him, of course?' I said.

"On the contrary. It appears their intercourse had been very much broken by various causes. He had, as he informed me proudly, managed to nurse Kurtz through two illnesses (he alluded to it as you would to some risky feat), but as a rule Kurtz wandered alone, far in the depths of the forest. 'Very often coming to this station, I had to wait days and days before he would turn up,' he said. 'Ah, it was worth waiting for! — sometimes.' 'What was he doing? exploring or what?' I asked. 'Oh, yes, of course;' he had discovered lots of villages, a lake, too — he did not know exactly in what direction; it was dangerous to inquire too much — but mostly his expeditions had been for ivory. 'But he had no goods to trade with by that time,' I objected. 'There's a good lot of cartridges left even yet,' he answered, looking away. 'To speak plainly, he raided the country,' I said. He nodded. 'Not alone, surely!' He muttered something about the villages round that lake. 'Kurtz



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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got the tribe to follow him, did he?' I suggested. He fidgeted a little. 'They adored him,' he said. The tone of these words was so extraordinary that I looked at him searchingly. It was curious to see his mingled eagerness and reluctance to speak of Kurtz. The man filled his life, occupied his thoughts, swayed his emotions. 'What can you expect?' he burst out; 'he came to them with thunder and lightning, you know—and they had never seen anything like it—and very terrible. He could be very terrible. You can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no! Now—just to give you an idea—I don't mind telling you, he wanted to shoot me, too, one day—but I don't judge him.' 'Shoot you!' I cried. 'What for?' 'Well, I had a small lot of ivory the chief of that village near my house gave me. You see I used to shoot game for them. Well, he wanted it, and wouldn't hear reason. He declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory and then cleared out of the country, because he could do so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true, too. I gave him the ivory. What did I care! But I didn't clear out. No, no. I couldn't leave him. I had to be careful, of course, till we got friendly again for a time. He had his second illness then. Afterwards I had to keep out of the way; but I didn't mind. He was living for the most part in those villages on the lake. When he came down to the river, sometimes he would take to me, and sometimes it was better for me to be careful. This man suffered too much. He hated all this, and somehow he couldn't get away. When I had a chance I begged him to try and leave while

## THE SHORT STORY

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there was time; I offered to go back with him. And he would say yes, and then he would remain; go off on another ivory hunt; disappear for weeks; forget himself amongst these people — forget himself — you know.' 'Why! he's mad,' I said. He protested indignantly. Mr. Kurtz couldn't be mad. If I had heard him talk, only two days ago, I wouldn't dare hint at such a thing. . . . I had taken up my binoculars while we talked and was looking at the shore, sweeping the limit of the forest at each side and at the back of the house. The consciousness of there being people in that bush, so silent, so quiet — as silent and quiet as the ruined house on the hill — made me uneasy. There was no sign on the face of nature of this amazing tale that was not so much told as suggested to me in desolate exclamations, completed by shrugs, in interrupted phrases, in hints ending in deep sighs. The woods were unmoved, like a mask — heavy, like the closed door of a prison — they looked with their air of hidden knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable silence. The Russian was explaining to me that it was only lately that Mr. Kurtz had come down to the river, bringing along with him all the fighting men of that lake tribe. He had been absent for several months — getting himself adored, I suppose — and had come down unexpectedly, with the intention to all appearance of making a raid either across the river or down stream. Evidently the appetite for more ivory had got the better of the — what shall I say? — less material aspirations. However, he had got much worse suddenly. 'I heard he was lying helpless, and so I came up — took my chance,' said the Russian. 'Oh, he is bad, very bad.' I directed my glass to the house. There

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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were no signs of life, but there was the ruined roof, the long mud wall peeping above the grass, with three little square window-holes, no two of the same size; all this brought within reach of my hand, as it were. And then I made a brusque movement, and one of the remaining posts of that vanished fence leaped up in the field of my glass. You remember I told you I had been struck at the distance by certain attempts at ornamentation, rather remarkable in the ruinous aspect of the place. Now I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow. Then I went carefully from post to post with my glass, and I saw my mistake. These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking, and disturbing — food for thought and also for the vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky; but at all events for such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole. They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way. I was not so shocked as you may think. The start back I had given was really nothing but a movement of surprise. I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know. I returned deliberately to the first I had seen — and there it was, black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids — a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth, was smiling, too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber.

“ I am not disclosing any trade secrets. In fact, the manager said afterwards that Mr. Kurtz’s methods had

## THE SHORT STORY

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ruined the district. I have no opinion on that point, but I want you clearly to understand that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him — some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say. I think the knowledge came to him at last — only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core. . . . I put down the glass, and the head that had appeared near enough to be spoken to seemed at once to have leaped away from me into inaccessible distance.

“ The admirer of Mr. Kurtz was a bit crestfallen. In a hurried, indistinct voice he began to assure me he had not dared to take these — say, symbols — down. He was not afraid of the natives; they would not stir till Mr. Kurtz gave the word. His ascendancy was extraordinary. The camps of these people surrounded the place, and the chiefs came every day to see him. They would crawl. . . . ‘ I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used when approaching Mr. Kurtz,’ I shouted. Curious, this feeling that came over me that such details would be more intolerable than those heads drying on the stakes under Mr. Kurtz's windows. After



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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all, that was only a savage sight, while I seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief, being something that had a right to exist—obviously—in the sunshine. The young man looked at me with surprise. I suppose it did not occur to him Mr. Kurtz was no idol of mine. He forgot I hadn't heard any of these splendid monologues on, what was it? on love, justice, conduct of life—or what not. If it had come to crawling before Mr. Kurtz, he crawled as much as the veriest savage of them all. I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these heads were the heads of rebels. I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers—and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks. 'You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz,' cried Kurtz's last disciple. 'Well, and you?' I said. 'I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from anybody. How can you compare me to . . .?' His feelings were too much for speech, and suddenly he broke down. 'I don't understand,' he groaned. 'I've been doing my best to keep him alive, and that's enough. I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities. There hasn't been a drop of medicine or a mouthful of invalid food for months here. He was shamefully abandoned. A man like this, with such ideas. Shamefully! Shamefully! I—I—haven't slept for the last ten nights. . . .'

"His voice lost itself in the calm of the evening. The long shadows of the forest had slipped down hill while



## THE SHORT STORY

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we talked, had gone far beyond the ruined hovel, beyond the symbolic row of stakes. All this was in the gloom, while we down there were yet in the sunshine, and the stretch of the river abreast of the clearing glittered in a still and dazzling splendor, with a murky and over-shadowed bend above and below. Not a living soul was seen on the shore. The bushes did not rustle.

“ Suddenly round the corner of the house a group of men appeared, as though they had come up from the ground. They waded waist-deep in the grass, in a compact body, bearing an improvised stretcher in their midst. Instantly, in the emptiness of the landscape, a cry arose whose shrillness pierced the still air like a sharp arrow flying straight to the very heart of the land; and, as if by enchantment, streams of human beings — of naked human beings — with spears in their hands, with bows, with shields, with wild glances and savage movements, were poured into the clearing by the dark-faced and pensive forest. The bushes shook, the grass swayed for a time, and then everything stood still in attentive immobility.

“ ‘ Now, if he does not say the right thing to them we are all done for,’ said the Russian at my elbow. The knot of men with the stretcher had stopped, too, half-way to the steamer, as if petrified. I saw the man on the stretcher sit up, lank and with an uplifted arm, above the shoulders of the bearers. ‘ Let us hope that the man who can talk so well of love in general will find some particular reason to spare us this time,’ I said. I resented bitterly the absurd danger of our situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonoring necessity. I could not hear a sound, but

## HEART OF DARKNESS

---

through my glasses I saw the thin arm extended commandingly, the lower jaw moving, the eyes of that apparition shining darkly far in its bony head that nodded with grotesque jerks. Kurtz — Kurtz — that means short in German — don't it? Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life — and death. He looked at least seven feet long. His covering had fallen off, and his body emerged from it pitiful and appalling as from a winding-sheet. I could see the cage of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arm waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide — it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him. A deep voice reached me faintly. He must have been shouting. He fell back suddenly. The stretcher shook as the bearers staggered forward again, and almost at the same time I noticed that the crowd of savages was vanishing without any perceptible movement of retreat, as if the forest that had ejected these beings so suddenly had drawn them in again as the breath is drawn in a long aspiration.

“ Some of the pilgrims behind the stretcher carried his arms — two shot-guns, a heavy rifle, and a light revolver-carbine — the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter. The manager bent over him murmuring as he walked beside his head. They laid him down in one of the little cabins — just a room for a bed-place and a camp-stool or two, you know. We had brought his belated correspondence, and a lot of torn envelopes and

## THE SHORT STORY

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open letters littered his bed. His hand roamed feebly amongst these papers. I was struck by the fire of his eyes and the composed languor of his expression. It was not so much the exhaustion of disease. He did not seem in pain. This shadow looked satiated and calm, as though for the moment it had had its fill of all the emotions.

“ He rustled one of the letters, and looking straight in my face said, ‘ I am glad.’ Somebody had been writing to him about me. These special recommendations were turning up again. The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! a voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper. However, he had enough strength in him — factitious no doubt — to very nearly make an end of us, as you shall hear directly.

“ The manager appeared silently in the doorway; I stepped out at once and he drew the curtain after me. The Russian, eyed curiously by the pilgrims, was staring at the shore. I followed the direction of his glance.

“ Dark human shapes could be made out in the distance, flitting indistinctly against the gloomy border of the forest, and near the river two bronze figures, leaning on tall spears, stood in the sunlight under fantastic head-dresses of spotted skins, warlike and still in statuesque repose. And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman.

“ She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her.

She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.

"She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us. Her long shadow fell to the water's edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose. A whole minute passed, and then she made a step forward. There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her. The young fellow by my side growled. The pilgrims murmured at my back. She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around



## THE SHORT STORY

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on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace. A formidable silence hung over the scene.

"She turned away slowly, walked on, following the bank, and passed into the bushes to the left. Once only her eyes gleamed back at us in the dusk of the thickets before she disappeared.

" 'If she had offered to come aboard I really think I would have tried to shoot her,' said the man of patches, nervously. 'I had been risking my life every day for the last fortnight to keep her out of the house. She got in one day and kicked up a row about those miserable rags I picked up in the storeroom to mend my clothes with. I wasn't decent. At least it must have been that, for she talked like a fury to Kurtz for an hour, pointing at me now and then. I don't understand the dialect of this tribe. Luckily for me, I fancy Kurtz felt too ill that day to care, or there would have been mischief. I don't understand. . . . No—it's too much for me. Ah, well, it's all over now.' "

"At this moment I heard Kurtz's deep voice behind the curtain, 'Save me!—save the ivory, you mean. Don't tell me. Save *me*! Why, I've had to save you. You are interrupting my plans now. Sick! Sick! Not so sick as you would like to believe. Never mind. I'll carry my ideas out yet—I will return. I'll show you what can be done. You with your little peddling notions—you are interfering with me. I will return. I . . . '

"The manager came out. He did me the honor to take me under the arm and lead me aside. 'He is very low, very low,' he said. He considered it necessary to sigh, but neglected to be consistently sorrowful. 'We



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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have done all we could for him — haven't we? But there is no disguising the fact, Mr. Kurtz has done more harm than good to the Company. He did not see the time was not ripe for vigorous action. Cautiously, cautiously — that's my principle. We must be cautious yet. The district is closed to us for a time. Deplorable! Upon the whole, the trade will suffer. I don't deny there is a remarkable quantity of ivory — mostly fossil. We must save it, at all events — but look how precarious the position is — and why? Because the method is unsound.' 'Do you,' said I, looking at the shore, 'call it "unsound method"?' 'Without doubt,' he exclaimed, hotly. 'Don't you?' . . . 'No method at all,' I murmured after a while. 'Exactly,' he exulted. 'I anticipated this. Shows a complete want of judgment. It is my duty to point it out in the proper quarter.' 'Oh,' said I, 'that fellow — what's his name? — the brickmaker, will make a readable report for you.' He appeared confounded for a moment. It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to Kurtz for relief — positively for relief. 'Nevertheless I think Mr. Kurtz is a remarkable man,' I said with emphasis. He started, dropped on me a cold, heavy glance, said very quietly, 'He was,' and turned his back on me. My hour of favor was over; I found myself lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe: I was unsound! Ah! but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmares.

"I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr. Kurtz, who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried. And for a moment it seemed to me as if I also were

buried in a vast grave full of unspeakable secrets. I felt an intolerable weight oppressing my breast, the smell of the damp earth, the unseen presence of victorious corruption, the darkness of an impenetrable night. . . . The Russian tapped me on the shoulder. I heard him mumbling and stammering something about 'brother seaman — couldn't conceal — knowledge of matters that would affect Mr. Kurtz's reputation.' I waited. For him evidently Mr. Kurtz was not in his grave; I suspect that for him Mr. Kurtz was one of the immortals. 'Well!' said I at last, 'speak out. As it happens, I am Mr. Kurtz's friend — in a way.'

"He stated with a good deal of formality that had we not been 'of the same profession,' he would have kept the matter to himself without regard to consequences. 'He suspected there was an active ill-will towards him on the part of these white men that ——' 'You are right,' I said, remembering a certain conversation I had overheard. 'The manager thinks you ought to be hanged.' He showed a concern at this intelligence which amused me at first. 'I had better get out of the way quietly,' he said, earnestly. 'I can do no more for Kurtz now, and they would soon find some excuse. What's to stop them? There's a military post three hundred miles from here.' 'Well, upon my word,' said I, 'perhaps you had better go if you have any friends amongst the savages near by.' 'Plenty,' he said. 'They are simple people — and I want nothing, you know.' He stood biting his lip, then: 'I don't want any harm to happen to these whites here, but of course I was thinking of Mr. Kurtz's reputation — but you are a brother seaman and ——' 'All right,' said I, after a time. 'Mr.

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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Kurtz's reputation is safe with me.' I did not know how truly I spoke.

"He informed me, lowering his voice, that it was Kurtz who had ordered the attack to be made on the steamer. 'He hated sometimes the idea of being taken away — and then again. . . . But I don't understand these matters. I am a simple man. He thought it would scare you away — that you would give it up, thinking him dead. I could not stop him. Oh, I had an awful time of it this last month.' 'Very well,' I said. 'He is all right now.' 'Ye-e-es,' he muttered, not very convinced apparently. 'Thanks,' said I; 'I shall keep my eyes open.' 'But quiet — eh?' he urged, anxiously. 'It would be awful for his reputation if anybody here —' I promised a complete discretion with great gravity. 'I have a canoe and three black fellows waiting not very far. I am off. Could you give me a few Martini-Henry cartridges?' I could, and did, with proper secrecy. He helped himself, with a wink at me, to a handful of my tobacco. 'Between sailors — you know — good English tobacco.' At the door of the pilot-house he turned round — 'I say, haven't you a pair of shoes you could spare?' He raised one leg. 'Look.' The soles were tied with knotted strings sandal-wise under his bare feet. I rooted out an old pair, at which he looked with admiration before tucking it under his left arm. One of his pockets (bright red) was bulging with cartridges; from the other (dark blue) peeped 'Towson's Inquiry,' &c., &c. He seemed to think himself excellently well equipped for a renewed encounter with the wilderness. 'Ah! I'll never, never meet such a man again. You ought to have heard him recite poetry

## THE SHORT STORY

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— his own, too, it was, he told me. Poetry!’ He rolled his eyes at the recollection of these delights. ‘Oh, he enlarged my mind!’ ‘Good-by,’ said I. He shook hands and vanished in the night. Sometimes I ask myself whether I had ever really seen him — whether it was possible to meet such a phenomenon! . . .

“ When I woke up shortly after midnight his warning came to my mind with its hint of danger that seemed, in the starred darkness, real enough to make me get up for the purpose of having a look round. On the hill a big fire burned, illuminating fitfully a crooked corner of the station-house. One of the agents with a picket of a few of our blacks, armed for the purpose, was keeping guard over the ivory; but deep within the forest, red gleams that wavered, that seemed to sink and rise from the ground amongst confused columnar shapes of intense blackness, showed the exact position of the camp where Mr. Kurtz’s adorers were keeping their uneasy vigil. The monotonous beating of a big drum filled the air with muffled shocks and a lingering vibration. A steady droning sound of many men chanting each to himself some weird incantation came out from the black, flat wall of the woods as the humming of bees comes out of a hive, and had a strange narcotic effect upon my half-awake senses. I believe I dozed off leaning over the rail, till an abrupt burst of yells, an overwhelming outbreak of a pent-up and mysterious frenzy, woke me up in a bewildered wonder. It was cut short all at once, and the low droning went on with an effect of audible and soothing silence. I glanced casually into the little cabin. A light was burning within, but Mr. Kurtz was not there.

“ I think I would have raised an outcry if I had



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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believed my eyes. But I didn't believe them at first — the thing seemed so impossible. The fact is I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was — how shall I define it? — the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly. This lasted of course the merest fraction of a second, and then the usual sense of commonplace, deadly danger, the possibility of a sudden onslaught and massacre, or something of the kind, which I saw impending, was positively welcome and composing. It pacified me, in fact, so much, that I did not raise an alarm.

“ There was an agent buttoned up inside an ulster and sleeping on a chair on deck within three feet of me. The yells had not awakened him; he snored very slightly; I left him to his slumbers and leaped ashore. I did not betray Mr. Kurtz — it was ordered I should never betray him — it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice. I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone — and to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with anyone the peculiar blackness of that experience.

“ As soon as I got on the bank I saw a trail — a broad trail through the grass. I remember the exultation with which I said to myself, ‘ He can't walk — he is crawling on all-fours — I've got him.’ The grass was wet with dew. I strode rapidly with clenched fists. I fancy I had some vague notion of falling upon him and giving him a drubbing. I don't know. I had some imbecile



## THE SHORT STORY

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thoughts. The knitting old woman with the cat obtruded herself upon my memory as a most improper person to be sitting at the other end of such an affair. I saw a row of pilgrims squirting lead in the air out of Winchester held to the hip. I thought I would never get back to the steamer, and imagined myself living alone and unarmed in the woods to an advanced age. Such silly things — you know. And I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased at its calm regularity.

“ I kept to the track though — then stopped to listen. The night was very clear: a dark blue space, sparkling with dew and starlight, in which black things stood very still. I thought I could see a kind of motion ahead of me. I was strangely cocksure of everything that night. I actually left the track and ran in a wide semi-circle (I verily believe chuckling to myself) so as to get in front of that stir, of that motion I had seen — if indeed I had seen anything. I was circumventing Kurtz as though it had been a boyish game.

“ I came upon him, and, if he had not heard me coming, I would have fallen over him, too, but he got up in time. He rose, unsteady, long, pale, indistinct, like a vapor exhaled by the earth, and swayed slightly, misty and silent before me; while at my back the fires loomed between the trees, and the murmur of many voices issued from the forest. I had cut him off cleverly; but when actually confronting him I seemed to come to my senses, I saw the danger in its right proportion. It was by no means over yet. Suppose he began to shout? Though he could hardly stand, there was still plenty of vigor in his voice. ‘ Go away — hide yourself,’ he said, in that

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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profound tone. It was very awful. I glanced back. We were within thirty yards from the nearest fire. A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow. It had horns — antelope horns, I think — on its head. Some sorcerer, some witch-man, no doubt: it looked fiend-like enough. ‘Do you know what you are doing?’ I whispered. ‘Perfectly,’ he answered, raising his voice for that single word: it sounded to me far off and yet loud, like a hail through a speaking-trumpet. If he makes a row we are lost, I thought to myself. This clearly was not a case for fisticuffs, even apart from the very natural aversion I had to beat that Shadow — this wandering and tormented thing. ‘You will be lost,’ I said — ‘utterly lost.’ One gets sometimes such a flash of inspiration, you know. I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid — to endure — to endure — even to the end — even beyond.

“ ‘I had immense plans,’ he muttered irresolutely. ‘Yes,’ said I; ‘but if you try to shout I’ll smash your head with ——’ there was not a stick or a stone near. ‘I will throttle you for good,’ I corrected myself. ‘I was on the threshold of great things,’ he pleaded, in a voice of longing, with a wistfulness of tone that made my blood run cold. ‘And now for this stupid scoundrel ——’ ‘Your success in Europe is assured in any case,’ I affirmed, steadily. I did not want to have the throttling of him, you understand — and indeed it would have been very little use for any practical purpose. I tried to break the spell — the heavy, mute spell of the

## THE SHORT STORY

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wilderness — that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of weird incantations; this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations. And, don't you see, the terror of the position was not in being knocked on the head — though I had a very lively sense of that danger, too — but in this, that I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him — himself — his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air. I've been telling you what we said — repeating the phrases we pronounced — but what's the good? They were common everyday words — the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man. And I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear — concentrated, it is true, upon himself with horrible intensity, yet clear; and therein was my only chance — barring, of course, the killing him there and then, which wasn't so good, on

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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account of unavoidable noise. But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had — for my sins, I suppose — to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself, too. I saw it — I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself. I kept my head pretty well; but when I had him at last stretched on the couch, I wiped my forehead, while my legs shook under me as though I had carried half a ton on my back down that hill. And yet I had only supported him, his bony arm clasped round my neck — and he was not much heavier than a child.

“ When next day we left at noon, the crowd, of whose presence behind the curtain of trees I had been acutely conscious all the time, flowed out of the woods again, filled the clearing, covered the slope with a mass of naked, breathing, quivering, bronze bodies. I steamed up a bit, then swung down-stream, and two thousand eyes followed the evolutions of the splashing, thumping, fierce river-demon beating the water with its terrible tail and breathing black smoke into the air. In front of the first rank, along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly. When we came abreast again, they faced the river, stamped their feet, nodded their horned heads, swayed their scarlet bodies; they shook towards the fierce river-demon a bunch of black feathers, a mangy skin with a pendent tail — something that looked like a dried



## THE SHORT STORY

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gourd; they shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language; and the deep murmurs of the crowd, interrupted suddenly, were like the response of some satanic litany.

"We had carried Kurtz into the pilot-house: there was more air there. Lying on the couch, he stared through the open shutter. There was an eddy in the mass of human bodies, and the woman with helmeted head and tawny cheeks rushed out to the very brink of the stream. She put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of articulated, rapid, breathless utterance.

" 'Do you understand this?' I asked.

"He kept on looking out past me with fiery, longing eyes, with a mingled expression of wistfulness and hate. He made no answer, but I saw a smile, a smile of indefinable meaning, appear on his colorless lips that a moment after twitched convulsively. 'Do I not?' he said slowly, gasping, as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power.

"I pulled the string of the whistle, and I did this because I saw the pilgrims on deck getting out their rifles with an air of anticipating a jolly lark. At the sudden screech there was a movement of abject terror through that wedged mass of bodies. 'Don't! don't! you frighten them away,' cried someone on deck disconsolately. I pulled the string time after time. They broke and ran, they leaped, they crouched, they swerved, they dodged the flying terror of the sound. The three red chaps had fallen flat, face down on the shore, as though they had been shot dead. Only the barbarous and



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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superb woman did not so much as flinch, and stretched tragically her bare arms after us over the somber and glittering river.

“ And then that imbecile crowd down on the deck started their little fun, and I could see nothing more for smoke.

“ The brown current ran swiftly out of the *heart of darkness*, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly, too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time. The manager was very placid, he had no vital anxieties now, he took us both in with a comprehensive and satisfied glance: the ‘ affair ’ had come off as well as could be wished. I saw the time approaching when I would be left alone of the party of ‘ unsound method.’ The pilgrims looked upon me with disfavor. I was, so to speak, numbered with the dead. It is strange how I accepted this unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms.

“ Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh, he struggled! he struggled! The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now — images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas — these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments. The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the hollow sham, whose fate

## THE SHORT STORY

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it was to be buried presently in the mold of primeval earth. But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotion, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power.

“ Sometimes he was contemptibly childish. He desired to have kings meet him at railway-stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things. ‘ You show them you have in you something that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability,’ he would say. ‘ Of course you must take care of the motives — right motives — always.’ The long reaches that were like one and the same reach, monotonous bends that were exactly alike, slipped past the steamer with their multitude of secular trees looking patiently after this grimy fragment of another world, the forerunner of change, of conquest, of trade, of massacres, of blessings. I looked ahead — piloting. ‘ Close the shutter,’ said Kurtz suddenly one day; ‘ I can’t bear to look at this.’ I did so. There was silence. ‘ Oh, but I will wring your heart yet!’ he cried at the invisible wilderness.

“ We broke down — as I had expected — and had to lie up for repairs at the head of an island. This delay was the first thing that shook Kurtz’s confidence. One morning he gave me a packet of papers and a photograph — the lot tied together with a shoe-string. ‘ Keep this for me,’ he said. ‘ This noxious fool ’ (meaning the manager) ‘ is capable of prying into my boxes when I am not looking.’ In the afternoon I saw him. He was lying on his back with closed eyes, and I withdrew

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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quietly, but I heard him mutter, 'Live rightly, die, die . . . ' I listened. There was nothing more. Was he rehearsing some speech in his sleep, or was it a fragment of a phrase from some newspaper article? He had been writing for the papers and meant to do so again, 'for the furthering of my ideas. It's a duty.'

"His was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines. But I had not much time to give him, because I was helping the engine-driver to take to pieces the leaky cylinders, to straighten a bent connecting-rod, and in other such matters. I lived in an infernal mess of rust, filings, nuts, bolts, spanners, hammers, ratchet-drills — things I abominate, because I don't get on with them. I tended the little forge we fortunately had aboard; I toiled wearily in a wretched scrap-heap — unless I had the shakes too bad to stand.

"One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' The light was within a foot of his eyes. I forced myself to murmur, 'Oh, nonsense!' and stood over him as if transfixed.

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror — of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some

## THE SHORT STORY

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image, at some vision — he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath —

“ ‘ The horror! The horror! ’

“ I blew the candle out and left the cabin. The pilgrims were dining in the mess-room, and I took my place opposite the manager, who lifted his eyes to give me a questioning glance, which I successfully ignored. He leaned back, serene, with that peculiar smile of his sealing the unexpressed depths of his meanness. A continuous shower of small flies streamed upon the lamp, upon the cloth, upon our hands and faces. Suddenly the manager's boy put his insolent black head in the doorway, and said in a tone of scathing contempt —

“ ‘ Mistah Kurtz — he dead. ’

“ All the pilgrims rushed out to see. I remained, and went on with my dinner. I believe I was considered brutally callous. However, I did not eat much. There was a lamp in there — light, don't you know — and outside it was so beastly, beastly dark. I went no more near the remarkable man who had pronounced a judgment upon the adventures of his soul on this earth. The voice was gone. What else had been there? But I am of course aware that next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole.

“ And then they very nearly buried me.

“ However, as you see, I did not go to join Kurtz there and then. I did not. I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end, and to show my loyalty to Kurtz once more. Destiny. My destiny! Droll thing life is — that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself — that comes too late — a



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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crop of unextinguishable regrets. I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable grayness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamor, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid skepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle than some of us think it to be. I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up — he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth — the strange commingling of desire and hate. And it is not my own extremity I remember best — a vision of grayness without form filled with physical pain, and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things — even of this pain itself. No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through. True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And



## THE SHORT STORY

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perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible. Perhaps! I like to think my summing-up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry — much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal.

“ No, they did not bury me, though there is a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire. I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to flech a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretense, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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their faces, so full of stupid importance. I dare say I was not very well at that time. I tottered about the streets — there were various affairs to settle — grinning bitterly at perfectly respectable persons. I admit my behavior was inexcusable, but then my temperature was seldom normal in these days. My dear aunt's endeavors to 'nurse up my strength' seemed altogether beside the mark. It was not my strength that wanted nursing, it was my imagination that wanted soothing. I kept the bundle of papers given me by Kurtz, not knowing exactly what to do with it. His mother had died lately, watched over, as I was told, by his Intended. A clean-shaved man, with an official manner and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, called on me one day and made inquiries, at first circuitous, afterwards suavely pressing, about what he was pleased to denominate certain 'documents.' I was not surprised, because I had had two rows with the manager on the subject out there. I had refused to give up the smallest scrap out of that package, and I took the same attitude with the spectacled man. He became darkly menacing at last, and with much heat argued that the Company had the right to every bit of information about its 'territories.' And, said he, 'Mr. Kurtz's knowledge of unexplored regions must have been necessarily extensive and peculiar — owing to his great abilities and to the deplorable circumstances in which he had been placed: therefore' — I assured him Mr. Kurtz's knowledge, however extensive, did not bear upon the problems of commerce or administration. He invoked then the name of science. 'It would be an incalculable loss if,' etc., etc. I offered him the report on the 'Suppression of Savage Customs,'

## THE SHORT STORY

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with the postscriptum torn off. He took it up eagerly, but ended by sniffing at it with an air of contempt. 'This is not what we had a right to expect,' he remarked. 'Expect nothing else,' I said. 'There are only private letters.' He withdrew upon some threat of legal proceedings, and I saw him no more; but another fellow, calling himself Kurtz's cousin, appeared two days later, and was anxious to hear all the details about his dear relative's last moments. Incidentally he gave me to understand that Kurtz had been essentially a great musician. 'There was the making of an immense success,' said the man, who was an organist, I believe, with lank gray hair flowing over a greasy coat-collar. I had no reason to doubt his statement; and to this day I am unable to say what was Kurtz's profession, whether he ever had any — which was the greatest of his talents. I had taken him for a painter who wrote for the papers, or else for a journalist who could paint — but even the cousin (who took snuff during the interview) could not tell me what he had been — exactly. He was a universal genius — on that point I agreed with the old chap, who thereupon blew his nose noisily into a large cotton handkerchief and withdrew in senile agitation, bearing off some family letters and memoranda without importance. Ultimately a journalist anxious to know something of the fate of his 'dear colleague' turned up. This visitor informed me Kurtz's proper sphere ought to have been politics 'on the popular side.' He had furry straight eyebrows, bristly hair cropped short, an eye-glass on a broad ribbon, and, becoming expansive, confessed his opinion that Kurtz really couldn't write a bit — 'but heavens! how that man could talk! He

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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electrified large meetings. He had faith — don't you see? — he had the faith. He could get himself to believe anything — anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party.' 'What party?' I asked. 'Any party,' answered the other. 'He was an — an — extremist.' Did I not think so? I assented. Did I know, he asked, with a sudden flash of curiosity, 'what it was that had induced him to go out there?' 'Yes,' said I, and forthwith handed him the famous Report for publication, if he thought fit. He glanced through it hurriedly, mumbling all the time, judged 'it would do,' and took himself off with this plunder.

"Thus I was left at last with a slim packet of letters and the girl's portrait. She struck me as beautiful — I mean she had a beautiful expression. I know that the sunlight can be made to lie, too, yet one felt that no manipulation of light and pose could have conveyed the delicate shade of truthfulness upon those features. She seemed ready to listen without mental reservation, without suspicion, without a thought for herself. I concluded I would go and give her back her portrait and those letters myself. Curiosity? Yes; and also some other feeling perhaps. All that had been Kurtz's had passed out of my hands: his soul, his body, his station, his plans, his ivory, his career. There remained only his memory and his Intended — and I wanted to give that up, too, to the past, in a way — to surrender personally all that remained of him with me to that oblivion which is the last word of our common fate. I don't defend myself. I had no clear perception of what it was I really wanted. Perhaps it was an impulse of unconscious loyalty, or the fulfilment of one of these ironic



## THE SHORT STORY

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necessities that lurk in the facts of human existence. I don't know. I can't tell. But I went.

"I thought his memory was like the other memories of the dead that accumulate in every man's life — a vague impress on the brain of shadows that had fallen on it in their swift and final passage; but before the high and ponderous door, between the tall houses of a street as still and decorous as a well-kept alley in a cemetery, I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind. He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived — a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence. The vision seemed to enter the house with me — the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of obedient worshipers, the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart — the heart of a conquering darkness. It was a moment of triumph for the wilderness, an invading and vengeful rush which, it seemed to me, I would have to keep back alone for the salvation of another soul. And the memory of what I had heard him say afar there, with the horned shapes stirring at my back, in the glow of fires, within the patient woods, those broken phrases came back to me, were heard again in their ominous and terrifying simplicity. I remembered his abject pleading, his abject threats, the colossal scale of his vile desires, the meanness, the torment, the tempestuous anguish of his soul. And later on I seemed to see his collected languid manner, when he said one day,



## HEART OF DARKNESS

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' This lot of ivory now is really mine. The Company did not pay for it. I collected it myself at a very great personal risk. I am afraid they will try to claim it as theirs though. H'm. It is a difficult case. What do you think I ought to do — resist? Eh? I want no more than justice.' . . . He wanted no more than justice — no more than justice. I rang the bell before a mahogany door on the first floor, and while I waited he seemed to stare at me out of the glassy panel — stare with that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, ' The horror! The horror! '

" The dusk was falling. I had to wait in a lofty drawing-room with three long windows from floor to ceiling that were like three luminous and bedraped columns. The bent gilt legs and backs of the furniture shone in indistinct curves. The tall marble fireplace had a cold and monumental whiteness. A grand piano stood massively in a corner, with dark gleams on the flat surfaces like a somber and polished sarcophagus. A high door opened — closed. I rose.

" She came forward, all in black, with a pale head, floating towards me in the dusk. She was in mourning. It was more than a year since his death, more than a year since the news came; she seemed as though she would remember and mourn forever. She took both my hands in hers and murmured, ' I had heard you were coming.' I noticed she was not very young — I mean not girlish. She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering. The room seemed to have grown darker, as if all the sad light of the cloudy evening had taken refuge on her forehead. This fair hair, this pale

## THE SHORT STORY

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visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident, and trustful. She carried her sorrowful head as though she were proud of that sorrow, as though she would say, I — I alone know how to mourn for him as he deserves. But while we were still shaking hands, such a look of awful desolation came upon her face that I perceived she was one of those creatures that are not the playthings of Time. For her he had died only yesterday. And, by Jove! the impression was so powerful that for me, too, he seemed to have died only yesterday — nay, this very minute. I saw her and him in the same instant of time — his death and her sorrow — I saw her sorrow in the very moment of his death. Do you understand? I saw them together — I heard them together. She had said, with a deep catch of the breath, ‘ I have survived ; ’ while my strained ears seemed to hear distinctly, mingled with her tone of despairing regret, the summing-up whisper of his eternal condemnation. I asked myself what I was doing there, with a sensation of panic in my heart as though I had blundered into a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for a human being to behold. She motioned me to a chair. We sat down. I laid the packet gently on the little table, and she put her hand over it. . . . ‘ You knew him well,’ she murmured, after a moment of mourning silence.

“ ‘ Intimacy grows quick out there,’ I said. ‘ I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.’ ”

“ ‘ And you admired him,’ she said. ‘ It was impossible to know him and not to admire him. Was it? ’ ”

“ ‘ He was a remarkable man,’ I said, unsteadily.

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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Then before the appealing fixity of her gaze, that seemed to watch for more words on my lips, I went on, 'It was impossible not to ——'

" 'Love him,' she finished eagerly, silencing me into an appalled dumbness. 'How true! how true! But when you think that no one knew him so well as I! I had all his noble confidence. I knew him best.'

" 'You knew him best,' I repeated. And perhaps she did. But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and only her forehead, smooth and white, remained illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love.

" 'You were his friend,' she went on. 'His friend,' she repeated, a little louder. 'You must have been, if he had given you this, and sent you to me. I feel I can speak to you — and oh! I must speak. I want you — you who have heard his last words — to know I have been worthy of him. . . . It is not pride. . . . Yes! I am proud to know I understood him better than anyone on earth — he told me so himself. And since his mother died I have had no one — no one — to — to ——'

" I listened. The darkness deepened. I was not even sure whether he had given me the right bundle. I rather suspect he wanted me to take care of another batch of his papers which, after his death, I saw the manager examining under the lamp. And the girl talked, easing her pain in the certitude of my sympathy; she talked as thirsty men drink. I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something. And indeed I don't know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his im-

## THE SHORT STORY

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patience of comparative poverty that drove him out there.

“ ‘ . . . Who was not his friend who had heard him speak once? ’ she was saying. ‘ He drew men towards him by what was best in them. ’ She looked at me with intensity. ‘ It is the gift of the great, ’ she went on, and the sound of her low voice seemed to have the accompaniment of all the other sounds, full of mystery, desolation, and sorrow, I had ever heard — the ripple of the river, the sougning of the trees swayed by the wind, the murmurs of wild crowds, the faint ring of incomprehensible words cried from afar, the whisper of a voice speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness. ‘ But you have heard him! You know! ’ she cried.

“ ‘ Yes, I know, ’ I said with something like despair in my heart, but bowing my head before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her — from which I could not even defend myself.

“ ‘ What a loss to me — to us! ’ — she corrected herself with beautiful generosity; then added in a murmur, ‘ To the world. ’ By the last gleams of twilight I could see the glitter of her eyes, full of tears — of tears that would not fall.

“ ‘ I have been very happy — very fortunate — very proud, ’ she went on. ‘ Too fortunate. Too happy for a little while. And now I am unhappy for — for life. ’

“ She stood up; her fair hair seemed to catch all the remaining light in a glimmer of gold. I rose too.

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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“ ‘ And of all this,’ she went on, mournfully, ‘ of all his promise, and of all his greatness, of his generous mind, of his noble heart, nothing remains — nothing but a memory. You and I ——’

“ ‘ We shall always remember him,’ I said, hastily.

“ ‘ No!’ she cried. ‘ It is impossible that all this should be lost — that such a life should be sacrificed to leave nothing — but sorrow. You know what vast plans he had. I knew of them too — I could not perhaps understand — but others knew of them. Something must remain. His words, at least, have not died.’

“ ‘ His words will remain,’ I said.

“ ‘ And his example,’ she whispered to herself. ‘ Men looked up to him — his goodness shone in every act. His example ——’

“ ‘ True,’ I said; ‘ his example too. Yes, his example. I forgot that.’

“ ‘ But I do not. I cannot — I cannot believe — not yet. I cannot believe that I shall never see him again, that nobody will see him again, never, never, never.’

“ She put out her arms as if after a retreating figure, stretching them back and with clasped pale hands across the fading and narrow sheen of the window. Never see him! I saw him clearly enough then. I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness. She said suddenly very low, ‘ He died as he lived.’

“ ‘ His end,’ said I, with dull anger stirring in me, ‘ was in every way worthy of his life.’



## THE SHORT STORY

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“ ‘ And I was not with him,’ she murmured. My anger subsided before a feeling of infinite pity.

“ ‘ Everything that could be done ——’ I mumbled.

“ ‘ Ah, but I believed in him more than anyone on earth — more than his own mother, more than — himself. He needed me! Me! I would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance.’

“ ‘ I felt a chill grip my chest. ‘ Don’t.’ I said, in a muffled voice.

“ ‘ Forgive me. I — I — have mourned so long in silence — in silence. . . . You were with him — to the last? I think of his loneliness. Nobody near to understand him as I would have understood. Perhaps no one to hear. . . .’

“ ‘ To the very end,’ I said, shakily. ‘ I heard his very last words. . . .’ I stopped in a fright.

“ ‘ Repeat them,’ she said in a heart-broken tone. ‘ I want — I want — something — something — to — to live with.’

“ ‘ I was on the point of crying at her, ‘ Don’t you hear them?’ The dusk was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in a whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of a rising wind. ‘ The horror! the horror!’

“ ‘ His last word — to live with,’ she murmured. ‘ Don’t you understand I loved him — I loved him — I loved him!’

“ ‘ I pulled myself together and spoke slowly.

“ ‘ The last word he pronounced was — your name.’

“ ‘ I heard a light sigh, and then my heart stood still, stopped dead short by an exulting and terrible cry, by the cry of inconceivable triumph and of unspeakable

## HEART OF DARKNESS

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pain. 'I knew it—I was sure!' . . . She knew. She was sure. I heard her weeping; she had hidden her face in her hands. It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due? Hadn't he said he wanted only justice? But I couldn't. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether. . . ."

Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. Nobody moved for a time. "We have lost the first of the ebb," said the Director, suddenly. I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed somber under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE \*

By Hamlin Garland

For twenty years Hamlin Garland has been a recognized interpreter of the Middle West in American fiction. His principal medium of expression is the novel, but he made his early reputation with a series of realistic short stories published in the volume entitled *Main Traveled Roads*. These are serious stories depicting farm and village life on the prairies of Iowa and in the coolies of Wisconsin. Mr. Garland was born at West Salem, Wisconsin, in 1860. At present he divides his time between his home in Chicago and his summer home at West Salem. Among Mr. Garland's notable publications may be mentioned the following: *Main Traveled Roads*, 1890; *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, 1895; *Prairie Folks*, 1900; *The Captain of the Gray Horse Troop*, 1902; *Hesper*, 1903; *The Shadow World*, 1908; *Cavanagh*, *Forest Ranger*, 1911; and *A Son of the Middle Border*, 1914. *Martha's Fireplace* was written in 1905 but its spirit and tone are similar to the earlier stories of the *Main Traveled Roads* series.

Stephen Thurber had no notion of falling in with a great sociologic movement when he decided to sell his farm in Wet Coolly and move into Bluff Siding; he merely yielded to the importunities of his wife and daughter, who looked away to the prim little village down the valley as a shining land of leisure and of possible social triumph.

It was a lonely place for the women — that Stephen generously admitted. A long ridge, some five hundred

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## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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feet high, cut them off from the railway, and all the young people were leaving, by twos and threes as fast as they grew up, and the roads were very bad, and visitors few.

So at last he sighed and said, "All right, mother, we'll go, but I'll declare I hate to give up the farm — I don't know what in time I'll do with myself."

He sold the place soon afterward for a sum which seemed enormous to his wife, and bought a naked, angular little "wing house," which occupied a fifty foot lot on one of the new streets in Bluff Siding. It was painted in blue and pink, stood indecently close to the board-walk, and it had only a half-dozen elms the size of broomsticks to shield it from the sun and wind. "The parlor is skursely large enough to contain the family, let alone company," Stephen sighfully remarked; "but if it suits you women, it suits me."

He seemed quite cheerful about it at the time, but the old farm looked so much more comfortable, so much more home-like on his return, that his heart failed him. The dignity, the amplitude of the buildings overwhelmed him with joy and pride — and sorrow. Every tree about the yard he had planted — some of them while Martha (his first wife and his first love) stood by to watch him tramp the earth about their roots. Now they rose far, far above the roof, like guardian soldiers, faithful and strong. Their branches had come to be like hands upraised in blessing in summer — like warding spear points in winter. Even the phloxes and the lilacs of the lawn were descendents of those his first love had planted.

And the house! How broad and generous and homey it seemed in contrast with that trig little town cottage.

## THE SHORT STORY

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He had built it for Martha in the flush of prosperity which followed the great Civil War, and it still remained the most imposing dwelling in Wet Coolly. It was a big, square frame building, New England in type, and had a fine, old-fashioned fireplace in the sitting-room — the only fireplace in the township, so far as he knew.

This curious "notion," this singular extravagance, had made the Thurber place renowned throughout the entire county. To have had a fireplace left over from pioneer days would have been excusable; but to put one in a new house was considered an act of folly lying just this side of dementia. Nevertheless, all the carpers came again and again to toast their shins in its glow, and the young folks were unanimous in their praise of it. They flocked to its blaze on winter nights with joy, and many a lively dance ended an evening of unforgettable cheer in its hospitable shine.

The mantle, as Martha loved to tell, had been carved by her grandfather and came from the old homestead in the State of Maine. She loved it for its associations, and in that love had taken it from its place in the Kittredge homestead and brought it West as a kind shrine or family totem. She had brought also the ancient andirons, the tongs and the shovel; even the old crane, almost as dear as the mantle, had been set in and completed her equipment.

Stephen, now that he was about to lose his treasures, recalled Martha's delight as she watched the workmen set the old oaken slab in its place. He re-lived the party she gave when the first fire was laid, and thrilled to remember how pretty she looked as she touched a match to the shavings and recited a little verse from *The Hang-*



## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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*ing of the Crane.* She was cheerful and, Stephen believed, happy; but when she went away he began to realize that she had never really taken root in the West, and now that he was growing old, he himself began to dwell more and more in the land of his youth. His thoughts returned often to his rocky New Hampshire intervale.

Yes, it was hardest of all to loose the tendrils of his heart from the hearth, for though Serilla had rearranged and redecorated after her own heart, Martha's fireplace remained unchanged.

"I'll let you have your way in most things, Serilly, but I want this room to look as it does now, just as she left it."

As the time for the migration drew near, Stephen stole away from the disordered kitchen to muse sadly before the fire. He had consented to a "vandue," and was willing Serilla should sell all the furniture they had, except a few pieces that had been Martha's, and as there was no demand for the irons and brasses around the fireplace, he expected to box them up as keepsakes.

The new owner was to take possession on the first of April, and so on the last day of March (a cold, gray day), having parted with all his live-stock, and the larger number of his implements, Stephen Thurber, after nearly forty years of life on his Coolly farm, took solemn leave of the trees he had planted, the barns he had built and the house which had been Martha's. The last thing he did before leaving was to visit the empty living-room, where his last fire was still blazing on the hearth. "I want to leave the room bright and warm, anyhow," he

## THE SHORT STORY

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said to his wife and daughter. "I don't want to remember it all cold and dark."

"Good gracious! You talk as you were going away a thousand miles," exclaimed his wife.

"I never expect to see the inside of that house again," he said, with a pathos too deep for her to comprehend.

The cottage in town seemed to grow smaller after they moved into it; but Serilla and Cariss were delighted with its snugness, and went about extolling its "advantages" with fluent tongues. "It's small, of course; but what do we want with a big house? It's just that much less work to take care of. Besides, here we have a pump right in the kitchen, and a furnace, and a bath room, and everything is as neat as a pin — no cracks or dark corners."

"I kind o' like dark corners," said Stephen. He felt its lack of hominess; but could not otherwise express it.

For the first month he was busy getting feed and other necessaries down from the farm. "By jocks, I never thought I'd have to cross that hill so many times during my whole natural course of life," he said to his family, and each trip left him gloomier, and at last he sent a hired teamster. "I can't go it again," he explained, bitterly; "it makes me sick to see that sloven spoil the place. He hain't cleaned up the lawn, and he's fencing off a part of the orchard for his pigs." This was like the desecration of an altar to him, but he said no more about it. During May he spent a good deal of time in his little seven-by-twelve garden, and in taking care of his little red barn, all of which seemed like a joke, like playing farmer. "Makes me feel as if I'd come back to second childhood, by jocks if it don't; and that truck-

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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patch o' mine — well, if the cat should get loose she'd eat up the whole bilin' mess of it. It's so little I hate to step on it — feel like puttin' it in the barn nights."

By June he was settled into a certain daily groove. "You want to just lay back and rest," said Hiram Fox, another veteran of the plow; "that's what the rest of us are doin', an' we're doin' it conscientiously. The town is full of 'tired farmers' like us."

And sure enough, as Stephen began to comprehend his neighbors, he found himself surrounded by a score or more of gnarled old grubbers like himself, men who knew how to swing the axe, the cradle, and the scythe, pioneers who had uprooted the great oaks of the hill-sides and ripped the sod of the meadow into strips in order to sow their wheat — men whose muscles had once been as steel bands and whose hearts were still the hearts of warriors. They were all old now, old and weather-worn, and heavy and slow, and taking their ease heroically while their work-bent wives fussed about their houses in a sort of automatic frenzy, toiling to pass the long days of summer, rising early to make the nights of winter short. They mostly lived as lonely couples, for their sons and daughters, impatient of the narrow opportunities and the slow round of life in the valley, had gone to the city or to the farther West.

Stephen, without knowing it, was passing through precisely the same phases, computing the same problems. For one thing, he could not break himself of the habit of early rising. He lay awake so long and so still each morning that his bones ached, and when he could endure the strain no longer, he slipped out of bed, built the fire, put on the teakettle for his wife, and filled the bucket

## THE SHORT STORY

---

with water before going to feed his horse. Even then, upon his return to the house he often found the kettle boiling away and no one astir. Sometimes he went to milk their meek little cow, and had time to take her to the pasture before breakfast was even a prophecy. All this was mighty discouraging, for the days were long even after his coffee.

Breakfast over, he made as much work as possible watering the horse and feeding his ten chickens, and then — was stumped! There was nothing to do, nothing to oversee, no one to “boss,” and no soul to talk to around the place, for the women were busy with their own affairs and apparently quite contented.

For all these reasons he soon fell into the habit of “going up street” like the other “time-killers,” to see what was going on.

The Chicago mail got in at ten, bringing the morning papers, and the post-office swarmed with the slow-moving gray-beards, all jocularly reviling each other about their lazy bones and rheumatic joints.

“I’d be ashamed to loaf around town the way you fellows do,” Pilcher would say. “Here’s corn-plantin’ in full drive; beautiful weather, too, and you boys hangin’ around town. I bet you didn’t, any one o’ you, have breakfast this morning till long after sun-up.”

Or again Hiram would say, “Hello, Steve, why ain’t you out in the meadow with your scythe this morning? Timothy is just in the purple.”

Then Stephen would reply, “Remember the time I hired you to help me put up hay on my north field? By jocks, that was a hot neck o’ the woods. I laid you under a bush that day.”



## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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"Yes, you did! I see you now, flat on your back, under that wild plum tree, pantin' like a lizard on a hot log."

In this way they followed the seasons, and in imagination took part in the farm duties, bragging with hearty frankness of what they were able once to do — in those far days when the land was new and they were all young. Each man listened patiently to the other, for their tales were faithful to the fact. They had truly been giants in those days.

The half-jocular, half-serious greetings over, they talked quite animatedly concerning the price of pork and cream, or touched lightly (and with decent respect) upon each other's political prejudices, and when the mail was distributed, each man put his paper under his arm, together with a parcel of steak for dinner, and trudged away homeward, intent on a certain easy chair beside a chosen window, where the light fell pleasantly, just of the right mind to enjoy the reflected tumult of the far-off wars and conflagrations of the outer world.

Stephen's cosy corner was in the sitting-room beside the west window, and his chair (one he had bought for Martha when she was ill the first time) was a plain old piece of walnut and cane, deep-seated and comfortable, which no one else presumed to sit in. He was firm on that point, and he insisted also on having a little table to himself on which his papers and his spectacles always lay ready to hand when he came from the garden or the street.

He generally took an hour for his paper; but this left some forty minutes to be filled in before dinner. Most of the veterans took naps at this hour, but Stephen had



## THE SHORT STORY

---

never been able to sleep in the middle of the day, so he usually went out and wandered around the garden, coddling the plants till he was on speaking terms with every potato blossom and beet top within his enclosure. These forty minutes were like hours to him, for his appetite was prodigious.

After dinner on pleasant days he hitched up his horse and drove about the country lanes. Serilla was always too busy to go, and Cariss considered it "slow." So he often took some crony, and together they jogged from farm to farm, following the progress of the crops, endlessly discussing the "left-handed way" in which the Germans did their work.

After these trips he usually tinkered around the house and re-read his paper till his eyes ached, and then, tired and sad, sat down to ponder the past with an occasional wistful, uneasy glimpse into the future. He began to wonder what it all meant, this life here on earth, for his was a deep and tender soul, sweet and kindly, holding something of the poet in solution. He both loved and feared the magic of these dreams of the past. As the nights lengthened, and the cold deepened he began to definitely long for the old fireplace. He mused much on the joy he used to feel as he came in from corn husking or rail splitting, wet and cold, to find the fire blazing on the hearth in the old log house. He minutely re-lived the days when the crane was newly hung and Martha sat beside him in the glow of the embers, her hand in his, while they spoke lovingly of the two little ones that died before they could speak.

He recalled her sickness and shuddered at the remembered loneliness of the old house after her death. Then

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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Serilla came, and later two robust sons. How they loved the old hearth, on which they were content to bask like puppies, snuggling against his feet, asking for more bear stories. The winters of that far time were made as cheery as summers by the blaze of the hearth, and the roar of the branches outside carried no chill to his heart.

As he awoke from such a dream and looked around Serilla's sitting-room, Stephen wondered what Martha would say of it. He began to consider how much a fireplace would mean to him; he even went so far as to slyly measure between the two west windows to see if one could not be set in, but the space was too narrow for anything but a hard-coal grate, and this he despised.

Sometimes at night, when his wife thought him dozing, he was really back in the old Coolly house watching the blazing logs, his mind filled with a delicious sadness, his eyes wet with tears. What was it that had gone out of his life? Here he sat in a perfectly comfortable room, possessing a horse and a carriage, with an abundance to eat and no cares — and yet the past, with all its toil, so called to him that his throat ached at the thought of it. Oh, if he could only re-live it all!

In those dear days the wind was fierce, the woods of winter desolate; but Martha's face shone like a star, and the old hearth rendered each night with his children a poem. Work was hard in those days; but rest was sweet. Hunger was keen; but eating brought no illness in its train.

He was loyal to Serilla, the mother of his children; but Martha was the wife of his youth, the one chosen wholly of his heart — and her fireplace came to typify all that

## THE SHORT STORY

---

was sweetest and most poetic in his life and in the lives of his children. It was an altar. Around it they had gathered when the corn was cribbed and the cattle housed for the night. In its light they had danced when the threshing was over and at Thanksgiving time.

He awoke with a start to the present.

“What will we do on Thanksgiving Day and at Christmas?” he asked, one night. “We can’t all get into this little box of a place. There ain’t a room in the house we can all sit down in, and if we could, we’d have nothing but the floor to look at. I declare it clean disheartens me.”

Serilla was a little dashed, but replied, comfortably, “We’ll manage somehow, I guess. We can’t have but a part of the children at a time, that’s all. We can bid your folks for Thanksgiving and my folks for Christmas.”

This rankled in Stephen’s mind, and thereafter he despised his toy house. It was a good enough tenement — a place to rent for awhile, but as a *home* in which to grow old, it was revolting in spite of its shining paint and spick and span new furniture.

In reality it held out no charm, no poetry, no associations; it was as rectangular as a dry-goods box, and as hopelessly prosaic as a “golden oak” wash-stand. A child born in such a house is cheated out of its birthright of dim, wide rooms lit up by the dancing firelight; robbed of the sagas the great trees chant as they roar outside in the wild wind — deprived of all shadow, all suggestion. Something of this flitted through Stephen’s thought, though he could not give it voice.

“Mother,” he said one day, “I wish we had one

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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room big enough to turn round in, and a rag carpet and some old-fashioned chairs and a fireplace —”

“ There you go again about that fireplace,” exclaimed his wife irritably. “ Nobody has fireplaces now, and how are you going to have a big room in this house? ”

“ I’ll build one, if you say so.”

“ Nonsense. This house is all right, plenty big enough for us — with Cariss likely to go off any minute. And as for Thanksgiving and Christmas, we can go to the hotel and get dinner, or take ’em in squads here at home.”

“ That wouldn’t do,” he protested. “ It wouldn’t do at all. It wouldn’t seem natural or right for us to go to a hotel on such days. We’d ought’o have all such meals at home.”

“ Well, you wouldn’t build a big house just to use for Thanksgiving, would you? ”

“ I d’know but I would,” he answered, sturdily. “ I d’know but it would be just about as good a way to spend our money as any other. I’m sick o’ this little coop. Let’s buy the Merrill place and have room to dance a jig if we want to.”

“ No, sirree! You don’ ketch me livin’ on the edge of town, with no sidewalks. I want to be right in the center of things, where we can have our telephone, ’lectric lights an’ all.”

“ I could put in the telephone — ”

“ I won’t hear of it, Steve. I came away from the farm to live in town, and I don’t want no half-way business in mine.”

Stephen surrendered to her will and made no further complaint.



## THE SHORT STORY

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They took their Thanksgiving dinner at the hotel — and on the way home Serilla said, “ There! For once in our lives, Cariss, we don’t have to think of Thanksgiving dinner dishes.”

“ That’s right,” answered Cariss, “ and yet it doesn’t seem a bit like Thanksgiving, does it, pa? ”

Stephen did not answer, for he was far away in the holidays of the past.

It is a tragic thing to grow old in daily labor, but it is almost as sad to grow old with nothing to do — and homeless. Among all his fellows Stephen alone began to perceive that to seek comfort for the body in new things left the mind filled with longing for old things — left it comfortless and unhoused.

So, while outwardly he remained the same, inwardly he was filled with recollections which made him tremble with their power. He greeted his neighbors with a smile which grew each month a little more absent-minded — a little more wistful — and when he wrote to his son in Chicago, he said: “ Our house is about as big as your hat, and it’s nice and neat, but we can’t have any Christmas this year — no place to set a table for more’n six. I’m trying hard to pass the time; ” and as he wrote his glasses grew misty with his tears.

But one day while he was sitting alone by his window at sunset, when the blue-jays were in flight, and the butter-nut leaves were falling, Stephen permitted himself a most heroic dream. In imagination he said to a contractor, “ I want my old house across the hill. I don’t care what it costs. I’m worth thirty thousand dollars, and if it takes half of it, I want my home. My



## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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women folks will never go back to the Coolly with me, and I can't live there alone, so you must bring the old house — fireplace and all — across the ridge and put it up under the trees somewhere. I want it just as it was — can you do this? ”

In this imagined conversation he was able to express himself easily; so he went on to say, “ I ain't got but a little while to stay here and I want to spend my days in peace — I want to be comfortable *in my mind* — and my mind ain't easy in this little box; I want a roomy room with shadows in the corners and a fire to watch when I don't want to read or talk — I want the old room — ”

And when his wife broke in on this magical revery he looked up with eyes so scared and pleading that she wondered and sharply cried out, “ What's the matter, Stephen? You look as if you'd seen a ghost. ”

“ There, mother — there! mebbe I have, ” he answered, and turned away to hide the quiver of his lips.

One day he came in from his usual trip up town visibly excited, and after he had taken off his coat and hung up his hat, he began:

“ Well, somebody has bought the Merrill place. ”

Serilla looked up from her sewing.

“ Who? ”

“ Hiram said that he heard that a man from Tyre, a contractor, had bought it and was going to build on speculation. ”

The Merrill place, as it was called, was the remnant of a fine farm which had once been the pride of old Abner Merrill. The house, standing among magnificent elms, commanded ten acres of land — all the rest had

## THE SHORT STORY

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been sold away by the heirs. The outbuildings were in decay and the yard was littered with rusty machinery, but it was a beautiful site, and Stephen had long admired it. He never passed it without planning what he would do if he owned it. Now he said: "Well, I am glad somebody is goin' to improve it, but I wish you had let me buy it."

To this Serilla made no answer.

Stephen had been "kind o' dauncy" all through the hot weather, but the work going forward on the Merrill place seemed to interest him. He fell into the habit of walking down there of a morning, and Serilla was glad of it, though she took her fling at him and his cronies.

"It's a wonder to me that you and Hiram and old man Pilcher don't get a tent and camp out in the Merrill yard. Seems to me if I was that builder I'd order you off the premises."

"He considers our advice valuable, mother."

"I'll *bet* he does!" she scornfully replied.

A few days later old Hiram reported to "the Committee on the Universe," that Mr. Hill, the builder was putting in a big chimney and fireplace. "He says all the city people have them these days."

"Well, now, Steve," said Pilcher, "you better go right down and give him a little help—you bein' an authority on fireplaces. We all hung our stockings in chimney corners back East, but I'll be dinged if I can remember just how you put 'em in."

"It's a funny thing to me," said Hiram. "In the days when we all had fireplaces we were crazy for stoves, and now when we are all pervided with furnaces some people want fireplaces. You'd think a family that had

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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nigh about froze to death on front of a hole in the wall would fight shy of 'em thereafter."

"But they have their good pints," said Stephen, eagerly. "Recollect the mug o' cider on the hob, and the chestnuts in the ashes, and the apple parin's and the dances—I tell you there's nothin' takes the place of a good old—"

"Well you can have hot cider and apple bees without a hole in the wall you can sling a yearling through. What's the matter with a base-burner?"

Stephen was stubborn. "Won't do. A base burner is such a sullen sort o' thing. No, sir. You've got to have the flames a-leapin' an' a-crackin'. I'll admit you need other heat," he added, "when the weather's too cold; but I just believe we'd all be healthier if we went back to the drafty old fireplaces. It did keep the room ventilated—the bad air was all swept up the chimney."

"Yes, 'long with the cat and the almanac and the weekly newspaper," remarked Hiram. "My stars! but the draft in our old chimney would draw nails out of oak planks. We had to put a stun on the Bible."

"But we didn't have consumption in those days—"

"We had somethin' worse," piped Pilcher.

"What's that?"

"Chilblains, by cracky!"

And then they all cackled together, and the committee broke up.

"What's this I hear?" inquired Serilla, sharply, a few days later. "Has the owner of the Merrill place asked Jane Kittredge to go into that house?"

"I guess that's right, mother."

## THE SHORT STORY

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Serilla snorted, " Well, that's a fool thing to do — how come it? Did you advise it? "

" Well, no — Mr. Hill was sort o' inquirin' 'round for someone, and as Amos was sick and Jane — "

" I knew it! I knew you had a hand in that — "

" Well, why not? Amos is my brother-in-law — I've a right to help him — and Jane's a good housekeeper; you can't deny that! "

Serilla turned away. She and Jane were a little " aidgewise " toward each other — partly because Amos was Stephen's first wife's brother and partly because Jane herself was quite as sharp-tongued as anyone.

Serilla had grazed her husband's larger secret, but had not really touched it — and he went out to the barn to think the situation over.

The truth was that all this buying, planning and building were stanzas in a poem of Stephen Thurber's imagination. He was the " owner; " Mr. Hill was merely his confederate, his blind.

To the sympathetic young fellow he had gone (while on a visit to Tyre) and to him had explained his needs. " Now, I can't move the old house over from the Coolly, that's out of the question, but I want you to go and look it over and build me another exactly like it. Make it just as it was when I went into it for the first time, so that when I sit down by the fire I can jest imagine I'm home again. " He paused there, for his voice failed him.

This was his secret pain — a sense of homelessness. All the subtle charm of his life, all the poetry of the past, was associated with the home beyond the ridge,

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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and the sense of loss grew in power of appeal day by day as his palms softened with idleness and his cheeks lost their coat of tan. He was bitterly unhappy in his present, and in consequence his face turned more and more fully toward the lovelit days of his youth. The thought of growing old on a fifty-foot lot in a cramped, high-colored, little house appalled him; and so, after weeks of burning desire and irresolution, he had broken ground.

No one suspected his connection with the building — his plan was too audacious, too far removed from the practical, everyday life of Bluff Siding to be imagined by anyone; and yet he was tormented with dread of the storm of shrill astonishment and protest which would encircle him when his secret should be disclosed.

His hope and comfort lay in the belief that a visit to the new house all complete and ready to move into would subdue and win his wife. Of Cariss he had no fear. He also, covertly, depended upon the sympathy and support of his "Chicago Boy," as he called John; but Albert, who was a hard-working dentist in Tyre, with a large and annually increasing family (and who was casting forward very definitely to his share of the estate) — Albert would look with disfavor on the expenditure of so much money in so foolish a fashion. As for Pilcher and old Hiram and the rest of the boys he was prepared to weather their laughter, for it would be good-natured — and, besides, the joke would be partly on them, for could he not say, "I fooled ye, though, every man jack of ye!"

But the strain of his duplicity wore upon him, and Serilla grew so concerned about his silence, his abstrac-



## THE SHORT STORY

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tion, that she wrote to John to come up and see what was the matter with his father.

John came, and in answer to his questions, Stephen said: "There's nothin' the matter with me, my son, only I ain't got nothin' to do. I miss the old place."

"Well, you are in *snug* quarters," John admitted, as he looked about the little house. "It's all very nice, mother, but it isn't a bit like home."

Serilla was defiant. "Did you s'pose I was goin' to end my days in Wet Coolly, twelve miles from the railroad?"

"I was just as sorry to leave the old house as he was. But, my stars! I couldn't stand the strain. It's all right for you to talk; you can come and go, but I had to stay there winter and summer —"

John was generous enough to acknowledge that it was a lonesome place for a woman in winter.

"Lonesome! You might as well be buried."

"I s'pose you're right, mother. It's all a part of a sorrowful exodus;" and leaving a prescription for his father he went back to the city, quite uninstructed in the real cause of his father's loss of health.

The point toward which Stephen was definitely working was a grand house-warming on New Year's Day; and he wished to surprise John especially, for *he* would certainly understand.

It was a time of anxiety, but it was a time of great joy. Each day as the house took shape he rode by or sat in the yard to feast upon it. From the porch in front to the little garden fence on its roof it was exactly like the old house — the windows were the same, the chimney rose through the shingles at the same point. Sometimes

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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he went inside, but the litter there troubled him, and besides, he wanted to wait until all was completed, in order that the impression might come to him in fulness of power.

His notion in getting Jane and her husband in was at first due to his desire to have someone to put the place to rights pending his confession to Serilla — a confession which became each day more difficult — for as the days slipped by and the house neared completion he became absorbed in the idea of restoring the furnishings of the house as it was when Martha was alive, an idea which came to him as he sat with Amos and his wife among their furniture. He was surprised to find a number of pieces of Martha's furniture which he had given them after her death, and he asked Jane to see if she could find the arm-chair he had let her sister have.

As the day for warming the hearth drew near Stephen fairly trembled with joyous excitement. The builder was paid up and gone; the yard was "slick as a whistle;" and the big new house stood cold and white and grand under the bare branches of the elms. The andirons and the mantle were in place, but Stephen had not yet permitted himself the luxury of sitting down before the fire — he wanted to wait till the room was furnished and Martha's rugs in place.

He was up early that day in order "to help Amos move in," he explained to his wife.

It was a raw day — cloudy with a strong north wind and winter seemed in the air — and when the night began to fall and Jane's furniture was sparsely distributed (Jane herself being busy in the kitchen), Stephen lit the

## THE SHORT STORY

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fire on his hearth and sat down before it with a thrill of satisfaction.

As he gazed the spell of that which he had wrought fell upon him. The first stanza of his poem was being sung by the roaring flames. On the white walls the golden light was flickering — and along the ceiling the shadows of the tall andirons danced grotesquely, familiarly, as of old. The mantle with its carven figures and its candles and vases seemed unchanged. The song of the elms outside was the same.

Tears dimmed his eyes, a big lump filled his throat. For a moment he had the exaltation of the artist. He seemed to have triumphed over time's decrees as the poet does. It appeared that he had actually restored his home, reconstructed the past, so that Martha might at any moment steal into the room, light of step as of old, to sit on the arm of his chair and to ask with that tenderness of sympathy which always melted his heart, "Tired, Stephen?" and lay her cheek against his shoulder.

He loved Serilla; he honored and cared for her as the mother of his children; but Martha was the wife of his youth, the Madonna of his dreams. She was associated with the mystery of his life, the dew of its morning. The whole earth was young that marvelous May when they two adventured into this suave and fertile land. The perfume of wild honey, the song of larks in flowery meadows lay in her name, and around her fireplace still lingered such heartiness of cheer, such neighborliness as the world no longer knew. Oh, those glorious pioneer days!

He sat so long in dreams that the red sky and fire grew gray and the good people in the kitchen became

## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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uneasy, and Amos came and brought a lamp, and then with an absent-minded smile the dreamer rose, stiff with the chill of age, and went back to his acknowledged home, to the wife of his present.

He came again the next day, and the next, and the next, re-perusing with inarticulate pain and pleasure his story in stone and steel, his epic in pungent pine, basking in the glow of his fire, forgetting his gray hair and nerveless limbs in the magic of the flame. From these secret delicious excursions into the past, these communions with the dead, he returned to his wife and daughter with reluctance, with a certain guilty fear. Without meaning to be disloyal, he began to find Serilla's brusque ways intolerable, and had moments when he resolved to keep his secret. He shrank from her sharp voice, her prosaic and harsh comment. He was like a bridegroom, jealous of the very name of his love.

He was loath to share his fire with anyone. It was so sweet to have this refuge, this place of dreams all to himself, to be absolute master of his hearth. The disclosure of his ownership would end all that, would overwhelm him with intrusive and discordant voices.

So he waited and dreamed while the edge of curiosity dulled, and the days went by swiftly like great birds blown southward by the sounding wind.

Amos had guessed Stephen's proprietorship of the house, but being a man of perception, he had cautioned his wife to yield no hint of their secret knowledge; and Jane was not merely discreet; she was sympathetic. She added in many little ways to Stephen's enjoyment of his home. The fire was always blazing on the hearth when



## THE SHORT STORY

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he came in, and he was left alone for the most part; only upon invitation did she enter the room to sit with him before his shrine.

This understanding was mutual. Stephen knew that they were in possession of his secret, but he gave no outward sign; indeed, he kept up the fiction by greeting them as his hosts, and even went so far as to discuss the coming of "the owner" in the spring. He always expressed gratitude for a chance to sit against the fire.

"I don't know what I'll do when you move out," he said once. "Well, I'll have one comfortable winter, anyway," he ended.

Serilla deeply resented his truancy, which she ascribed to the influence of Jane Kittredge, and a barrier of distrust and defense had risen between them. Cariss, involved with the young life of the village, gave very little thought to the matter, though she occasionally defended her father. "If he gets any fun out of Aunt Jane, let him," she rather flippantly remarked; and the tone of her plea did not incline Stephen to confide in her. John would understand, but he hesitated about writing. "I'll wait till he comes up a-Christmas," he decided.

His old cronies found him distinctly less companionable, more remote. A settled sadness, a growing reserve difficult of analysis, had come into his daily greeting. He told fewer stories, he was less often at the grocery store, and his laugh was seldom heard.

All this change they referred to ill health, and their comment was gentle and commiserating.

"Stephen is failin' fast," remarked Pilcher, one day. "The cold weather seems to grip him. It wouldn't



## MARTHA'S FIREPLACE

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surprise me to hear any day that he was taken flat down. I doubt if he stands many more of these winters."

Hiram looked up with a smile which was at once defiant and wistful. "We're all in the same boat and driftin' the same way," he said; and then they spoke with resolute cheer of the weather and the price of firewood.

November passed without any change of plan on Stephen's part, and December was half-way gone before he broke silence. Being moved by a letter from John, he suddenly said one night, quite in his old, hearty way, "I tell you what you do, Amos. You and Jane send out invitations to John and Albert's folks and to all of Serilla's kin bidding 'em all to a Christmas dinner. Say to the boys that, seein's their mother hain't got room enough, I'm kindo' goin' in with you here. You can say I'm helpin' out on the turkey and things, and the children's stockin's, and that they can stay here — part of 'em at least. We can all get together here in this big room —" A lump came into his throat and he did not finish.

Jane and Amos fell in with the suggestion quite as if it were a command, and withdrew to write out the letters of invitation, leaving Stephen alone in the glow of the fire, for the walk that day had been a stern battle with both wind and snow and he seemed older and feebler.

"It looks like he was planning to let 'em all know — don't you think so?" asked Amos.

"If he does, he'll be sorry. Albert will be furious, and so will Serill'. It will all be a foolish waste of money to them. She never'll come here in this world to live."

"I can see he kindo' dreads it, he does take such a

## THE SHORT STORY

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power o' comfort in it — he's entitled to a little fun, seems to me."

A couple of hours later, as they went down-stairs to lock the doors and put out the lights, Jane said, "Look in and see how the fire in the big room is, while I see to the furnace. My, hear that wind!"

Amos opened the door, but paused on the threshold and beckoned with a smile. "Come here, Jane," he whispered. "I thought I didn't hear him go out." Jane looked over his shoulder with a word of surprise.

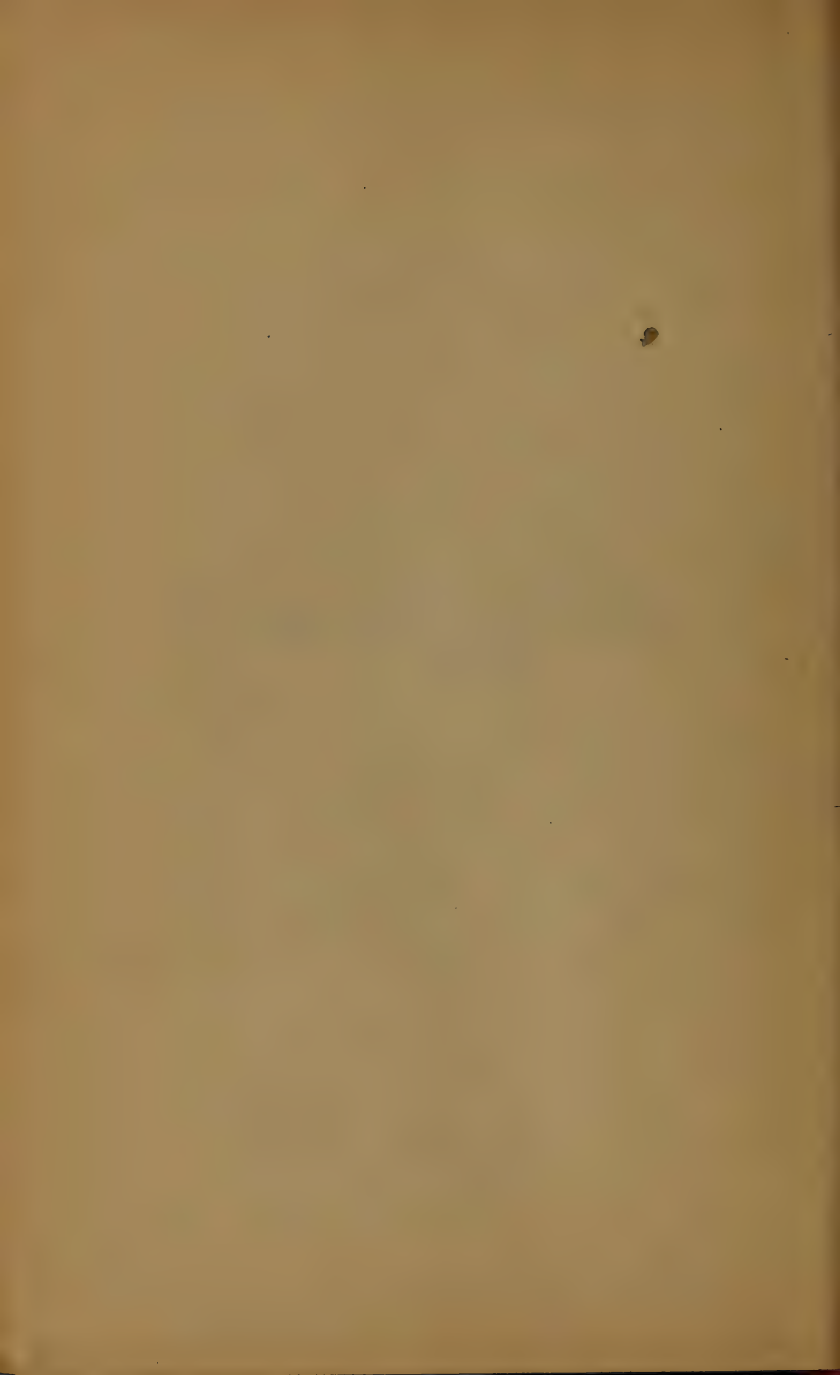
The fire had burned low. In a deep bed of ashes a big oaken gnarl still smouldered, sending up now and again a single leaping jet of flame, and by its fitful light Stephen was intermittently revealed, deep-sunk in his armchair, his gray head turned laxly aside, his gaunt hands hanging emptily by his side.

"Better wake him," said Jane. "He'll take a chill. He'd better sleep here tonight."

Amos went over and touched the sleeper on the shoulder. He did not respond. Amos laid his hand against the grizzled cheek, and turned with a start toward his wife, a look of awe on his face — a look, a gesture which told his story instantly and with completeness.

Stephen was with Martha, and the past and the present were to him as the morning and the evening of one day.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**  
**LIST OF SHORT STORIES**  
**INDEX**



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The list following does not purport to contain *all* of the best short stories, nor to be a complete list of authors who write good short stories; nor does it guarantee each story to meet all the requirements for admission into the "good" class. There are so many stories, and so many capable writers of the short story, that no one could reasonably be expected to know them all; consequently this list will probably be open to sharp censure for what it omits as much as for what it has included.

The list says to the reader merely this: You are in need of a selection of a hundred or two hundred stories that have attracted attention, or are, it may be, famous as masterpieces. You need to know where to find them. Here is the information you seek.

For the student, however, after he has become acquainted with the elements of technic, the most profitable application of his knowledge is not to a list selected by someone else, but to the stories he reads from day to day in the current magazines. It may be said, though, that stories that have been made permanent by being included in volumes of collected stories have been thought better than the average by someone, and so perhaps merit a careful examination by the student of the short story as a literary form.

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# INDEX

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- Addison, 11, 13  
*Adventure of the Speckled Band, The*, Conan Doyle, 241  
*Adventures of a Guinea, Chrysal, or the*, Johnstone, 18  
Aesop's Fables, 9  
*Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, 6  
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey, 33, 72, 80  
*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, 6  
Allen, James Lane, 31, 33  
*American Prose Masters*, Brownell, 12  
*Among the Corn Rows*, Hamlin Garland, 31  
*Angelus, The*, 69  
*Apparition of Mrs. Veal, The*, De-foe, 13  
Appearance of Truth, 74  
Apuleius, Lucius, 8  
*Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, 5, 22  
Aristotle, 8, 40  
Arthurian Cycle, *The*, 10  
Atmosphere, 20  
Austin, William, 13
- Background, 20  
*Barry Lyndon*, Thackeray, 11  
Beast Fables, 9  
Beginnings, 83  
Bible Stories, 6  
Bjornson, 191  
Boccaccio, 9  
*Book of Jonah, The*, 7  
*Book of Ruth, The*, 7  
*Book of the Short Story, The*, Jessup and Canby, 5, 15  
Brownell, W. C., 12  
*Brushwood Boy, The*, Rudyard Kipling, 28  
Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 10
- Cable, George W., 32, 33  
Canby, Jessup and, 5, 15  
*Canterbury Tales, The*, Chaucer, 6, 10  
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 10  
Character Development, 64  
Character Portrayal, 64  
Character, Stories of, 20
- Characters, 59  
Characters Worth Knowing, 61; unusual, 61  
Chaucer, 6, 10  
Chronological Development of the Short Story, 15  
*Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea*, 18  
Classification of Themes, 27; groups, 30  
*Clerk's Tale, The*, Chaucer, 10  
Condensations of Experience, 63  
Conditions, 19  
*Confessio Amantis*, Gower, 10  
Connolly, James B., 32, 74, 313  
Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*, 406  
Conversation, 85  
*Coward, The*, Guy de Maupassant, 34  
Culmination, *The*, 40  
*Cupid and Psyche*, 8
- Davis, Richard Harding, 32, 66  
Dawson, William J., 4, 8  
*Decameron, The*, Boccaccio, 9, 10  
Defoe, 13  
Delineation of Character, 33  
*Derelict, A*, Richard Harding Davis, 32, 66  
Detective Story, Plot in the, 45  
Development of Character, 33, 64  
Disintegration of Character, 33  
*Documents in the Case, The*, Brander Matthews, 80  
*Domain of Arnheim, The*, Poe, 22  
*Don Quixote*, Cervantes, 10  
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, 241  
*Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*, Hawthorne, 34  
*Dr. Heiddegger's Experiment*, Hawthorne, 131  
*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson, 31  
*Drawn Blind, The*, Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch, 33
- Egyptian Stories*, 5  
Eliot, George, 25  
*Elsie Venner*, Holmes, 8  
Emotion, 70



# INDEX

- Endings, 90  
*Essays and Reviews*, Stevenson, 72  
 Evolution of the Short Story, The, 4  
 Fables, 9  
*Faerie Queene, The*, Spenser, 76  
*Fall of the House of Usher, The*, Poe, 71  
*Fall of Princes*, Lydgate, 10  
 Falling Action, 42  
*Father, The*, Bjornson, 191  
*Fielding, Tom Jones*, 11  
 Garland, Hamlin, *Among the Corn Rows*, 31, 32, 450  
 Garnett, Richard, 9  
*Gesta Romanorum*, 8, 9  
*Golden Ass, The, or Metamorphoses*, Apuleius, 8  
*Goliath*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 72  
 Gower, 10  
*Great English Short Story Writers*, W. J. Dawson, 8  
*Great Stone Face, The*, Hawthorne, 34  
 Greatest Themes, The, 36  
 Greek and Roman Tales, 7  
 Gregory, Lady, 76  
*Griselda, The Story of Patient*, 10  
 Groups of Themes, 30  
*Guardian, The*, 11  
 Guiding Lines, 86  
 Hamilton, Clayton, 72, 78  
*Hans Eulenspiegel*, 9  
 Harris, Joel Chandler, 9  
 Harte, Bret, 26  
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 3, 8, 12, 13, 34, 131  
*Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad, 406  
 Henry, O. (Sydney Porter), *The Whirligig of Life*, 83, 94  
 Herrick, Robert, 31, 39  
 History of the Short Story, The, 3  
 Hogg, James ("The Ettrick Shepherd"), 12, 196  
 Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 8  
 Hope, Anthony, 72, 234  
 Horne, Charles F., 4, 8  
 Idealism, 76  
*Idylls of the King, The*, Tennyson, 10, 76  
 Incident, Stories of, 20, 22  
 Incidents in Short Stories, 19  
 Initial Incident, The, 42  
 Impression of Life, An, 34  
 Irving, Washington, 12, 13  
 Jessup and Canby, 5, 15  
 Johnson, 11  
 Johnstone, Charles, *Ohrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea*, 18  
*Jonah, The Book of*, 7  
*Jotham's Parable of the Trees Choosing a King*, 6  
*Kathleen ni Houlihan*, William Butler Yeats, 76  
 Kind of People in Stories, The, 60  
*King Arthur Stories*, 10  
*King Lear*, 71  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 4, 28, 89; his titles, 82  
*Lady or the Tiger?, The*, Frank Stockton, 22  
*Lady with the Fringe, The*, 19  
*Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The*, Irving, 12, 13  
*Ligeia*, Poe, 109  
*Little Lazarus of Tormes*, 9  
*Lives of the Saints*, 9  
*Lodging for the Night*, A, Stevenson, 35  
 London, Jack, 30, 361  
 Longfellow, 6, 10  
*Luck of Roaring Camp, The*, Bret Harte, 26  
 Lydgate, 10  
 Mabie, Hamilton W., 3  
*Macbeth*, 71  
*Magicians, Tales of the*, 5  
*Makers of English Fiction*, W. J. Dawson, 4  
 Malory, Sir Thomas, 10  
 Management of the Materials, 80  
 Mandeville, Sir John, 9  
*Man Who Would be King, The*, Rudyard Kipling, 89  
*Marjorie Daw*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 80  
*Martha's Fireplace*, Hamlin Garland, 450  
*Master of the Inn, The*, Robert Herrick, 31  
*Materials and Methods of Fiction*, Clayton Hamilton, 72  
 Materials from Which Stories Are Made, The, 17  
 Matthews, Brander, 15  
 Maupassant, Guy de, 28, 31, 46, 146  
 Merimee, Prosper, 22, 220  
*Merry Men, The*, Stevenson, 34  
*Metamorphoses, or The Golden Ass*, Apuleius, 8  
 Methods of Delineating Character, 64

# INDEX

- Millet, 69  
*Mirza, The Vision of*, Addison, 12, 13  
 Modern Short Story, The, 14  
 Morrison, Arthur, 32, 65, 69, 228  
*Morte d' Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory, 10  
*Mrs. Bathurst*, Rudyard Kipling, 89  
 Munchausen, Baron, 9  
*Mysterious Bride, The*, James Hogg, 12, 196  
*Napoleon Jackson*, Ruth McEnery Stuart, 33  
*Necklace, The*, Guy de Maupassant, 28, 146  
*Night Out*, A, Edward Peple, 18  
*Odyssey, The*, 37  
*Old King Solomon of Kentucky*, James Lane Allen, 31  
*Old Man of the Hill, The Tale of the*, from Fielding's *Tom Jones*, 11  
 Old Testament Stories, 6, 7  
*On the Stairs*, Arthur Morrison, 32, 65, 69, 228  
*Other Wise Man, The*, Henry van Dyke, 28  
 People in Stories, 18  
 Peple, Edward, 18  
*Pere Raphael*, George W. Cable, 33  
*Peter Rugg, the Missing Man*, William Austin, 13  
 Petrie, 5, 6  
 Petrarch, 10  
 Picaresque Tales, 9  
*Piece of String, The*, Guy de Maupassant, 28, 31, 46  
*Pilgrim's Progress*, 10  
 Place in Stories, 19  
 Plan for the Study of a Short Story, A, 92  
 Plot, 39  
 Plot Diagram, A Typical, 41  
 Plot in Detective Stories, 45  
 Poe, Edgar Allan, 12, 13, 22, 28, 109  
 Point of View, 80  
*Poison Maid, The*, Richard Garnett, 9  
*Poison of Sin, Of the*, 8  
 Portrayal of Character, 64  
*"Posson Jone,"* George W. Cable, 32  
 Predominant Element, The, 21  
 Preliminary Situation, The, 40  
 Primary Purpose, The Author's, 35  
*Princess' Tragedy, The*, from Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*, 11  
*Prodigal Son, The*, 7, 22, 69, 217  
*Prose Tales*, Poe, 4  
 Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur T., 33  
*Quite So*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 33  
*Rappicinni's Daughter*, Hawthorne, 8  
 Realism and Romance, 75  
*Redgauntlet*, Sir Walter Scott, 11  
 Restraint, 87  
*Revolt of Mother, The*, Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman, 84  
*Reynard the Fox, Stories of*, 9  
*Rip Van Winkle*, Irving, 12, 13  
*Rising of the Moon, The*, Lady Gregory, 76  
 Rogue Stories, 9  
 Roman Tales, Greek and, 7  
 Romance, 75  
*Ruth, The Book of*, 7  
*Samuel*, Jack London, 30, 361  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 11, 13  
 Setting, 19, 69  
 Setting, Stories of, 20  
 Shakespeare, 13  
*Shipwrecked Sailor, The*, 5  
 Short Story, Novelette, and Novel, 77  
*Short Story in English, The*, Henry S. Canby, 15  
 Short Story Materials, 17  
*Silas Marner*, George Eliot, 25  
*Sir Roger de Coverley Papers, The*, Addison, 11  
*Speckled Band, The Adventure of the*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 241  
*Spectator, The*, 11  
 Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 76  
*Spirit of Sweetwater, The*, Hamilton Garland, 32  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 4, 31, 72, 277  
 Stockton, Frank, 22  
 Stories of Character, Setting, or Incident, 20  
*Stories New and Old*, Hamilton W. Mabie, 3  
*String, The Piece of*, Guy de Maupassant, 28, 31, 46  
 Stuart, Ruth McEnery, 33  
 Suggestion and Restraint, 87  
 Suspense, 87  
 Symbolism, 76  
*Taking of the Redoubt, The*, Merimee, 22, 220  
*Tales and Sketches*, James Hogg, 12  
*Tales of the Magicians, The*, 5, 6

# INDEX

- Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Long-fellow, 6, 10  
*Tattler, The*, 11  
*Technique of the Novel, The*, Charles F. Horne, 4, 8  
 Tennyson, 10  
 Thackeray, 11  
 Theme, The Meaning of, 26  
 Themes, Groups of, 30  
*They*, Rudyard Kipling, 89  
*Thousand and One Nights, The*, 6  
*Three Arshins of Land*, Tolstoi, Lyof N., 158  
 Time, 19  
 Titles, 82  
 Tolstoi, Lyof N., 158, 173  
*Tom Jones*, Fielding, 11  
 Tone, 20, 70  
*Trees Choosing a King, The*, 6  
*Truth of the Oliver Cromwell, The*, James B. Connolly, 32, 35, 313  
 Typical Plot Diagram, A, 41  
*Uncle Remus Stories*, Joel Chandler Harris, 9  
 Unusual People, 61; Situations, 62; Impressions, 62  
 Van Dyke, Henry, 28  
 Verisimilitude, 74  
*Village Lear, A*, Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman, 32  
*Vision of Mirza, The*, Addison, 12, 13  
*Wandering Willie's Tale*, from *Redgauntlet*, Scott, 11, 13  
*Wayside Inn, Tales of a*, Long-fellow, 6  
*Where Love Is, There God Is Also*, Tolstoi, Lyof N., 173  
*Whirligig of Life, The*, O. Henry (Sydney Porter), 83, 94  
*Will o' the Mill*, Stevenson, 277  
 Wilkins-Freeman, Mary E., 32, 84  
 Writer's Primary Purpose, The, 35  
 Yeats, William Butler, 76

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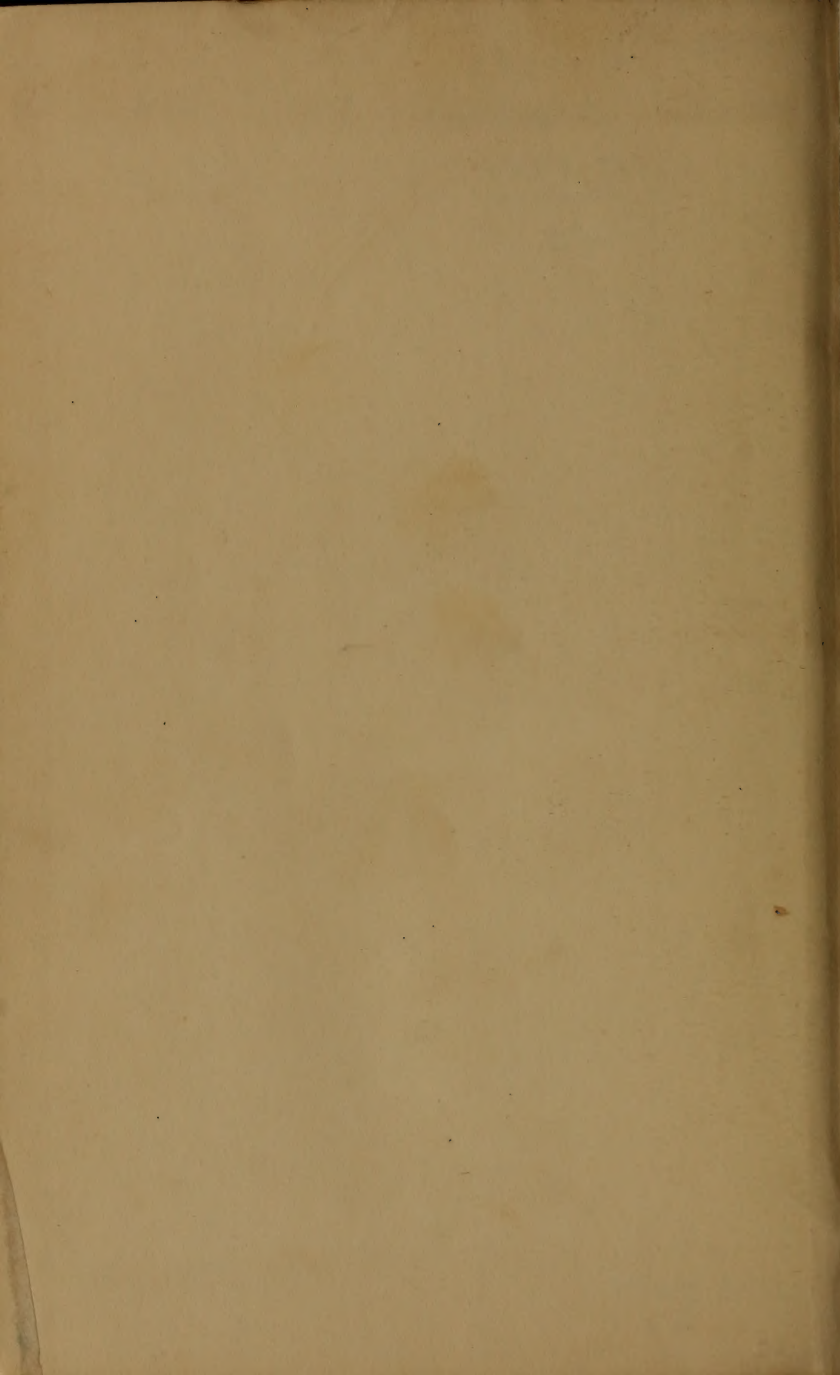
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